

Austin P.D.

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EVERY
WEDNESDAY.



WHAT PRICE EGGS?

(A lively incident from this week's grand yarn of Tom Merry & Co., at St. Jim's.)

A ROUSING LONG YARN OF TOM MERRY & CO., AT ST. JIM'S—

The IMPOSTOR!

A bottle of hair-dye works wonders with a fellow's appearance, but it doesn't change his character. But it takes Wrayson, the new chap in the Fourth at St. Jim's, a long time to realise that important fact when he assumes the name and guise of his brother.

CHAPTER 1.

A Change of Identity!

THE whistle blew, the green flag went up, and the train slid along beside the platform, while Arnold Wrayson, hanging out of the window, waved to his mother as long as she was in sight.

His brother Claude sat sullenly back in a corner.

The two were very much alike in features, and one might well have taken them for twins. Actually, Claude was the elder by over a year, a fact upon which he had always based a claim to have his own way. His hair, though hardly light enough to be called fair, was several shades lighter than his brother's.

Arnold dropped into another corner seat. They had the compartment to themselves.

"Well, here's off to fresh fields!" he said cheerily.

He was willing to ignore the fact that both had left their last school because the Head would put up with Claude no longer. He had nothing against the younger brother; but the boys' parents were not willing to have Arnold stay on after Claude had been expelled in all but name.

"You may feel jolly about it; I don't!" snarled Claude.

"Oh, make the best of it, old chap! They say Rylcombe Grammar School's a jolly decent place!"

"Not as good as St. Jim's."

"Well, perhaps not," replied Arnold.

He would not tell Claude that he was glad they were going to different schools, or that he would not have been sorry had those schools been farther apart.

Arnold Wrayson was very fond of his brother. There was little he would not have done for Claude. He had always made the best of him, and refused to believe the worst—until he was obliged to.

Unfortunately he was usually obliged to.

While Arnold was as decent a fellow as one might wish to find, Claude was an evil-tempered and dishonest young rotter. More than one master who had had anything to do with him had said that he was utterly without any redeeming features.

He had been like a millstone round Arnold's neck. Arnold had never had a chance. He might have had it if he had dissociated himself completely from his brother. But he could not give Claude up, and because of that he had found himself in constant hot water with those who could not stand Claude at any price.

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"It's not fair!" snapped Claude.

"What isn't?" asked Arnold.

"You know! I'm older than you are. If we're to go to different schools I ought not to be sent to the second-rate one. Rylcombe Grammar School! Who ever heard of the blessed place! But everyone's heard of St. Jim's."

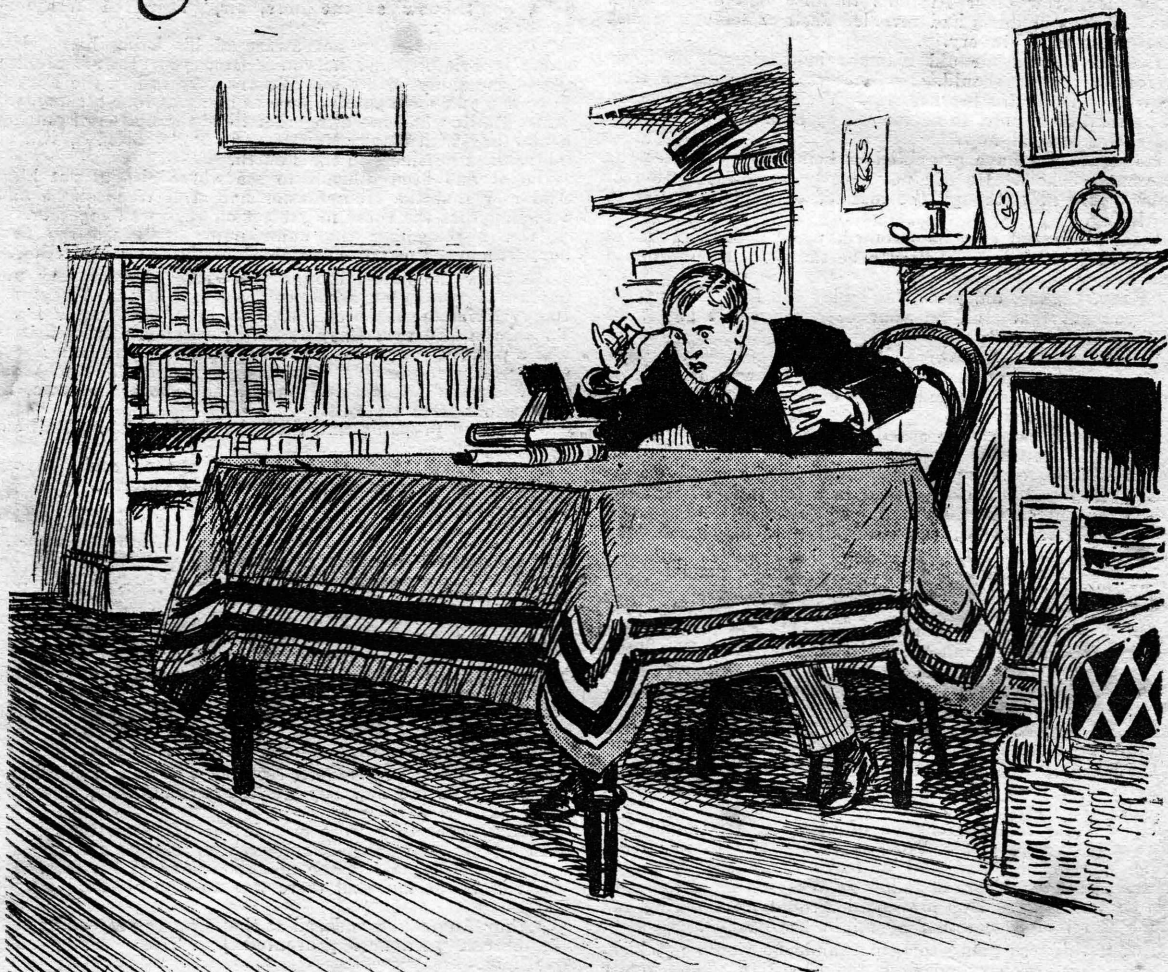
"Can't be helped," said Arnold.

"I'm not so sure about that."

"Look here, Claude, why don't you stop grouching? It's no good. Here you are with a fresh chance at a new

—INTRODUCING A STRANGE NEW BOY!

by MARTIN CLIFFORD.



place where no one knows you. I'm going to speak straight for once. You've played the fool, and worse. You've got off lightly. If you'd had the sack—and you know very well you'd have been sacked if Mr. Reynolds had had his way—it was the Head who was lenient—you'd have been refused by most schools. Why not make the best of it?"

"If I go to this rotten little Grammar School I know jolly well I shall be in hot water before I'm there a week!" said Claude savagely. "And I shan't care. It's all very well for you to talk; but it isn't fair!"

"I can't see that. And, anyway, there's nothing that can be done to alter it."

"Yes there is."

Arnold faced round with a start. He had been talking to Claude with his face averted, for he had become quite fed-up with his brother's sullen look. He had watched

the countryside slipping past under a clouded sky, preferring anything to that lowering face.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"I don't see why I shouldn't go to St. Jim's, while you go to the Grammar School!"

"Oh, don't talk rot! It can't be worked. I won't say I'd agree if it could. But it simply can't."

"Yes, it can! I've thought it all out. The pater and mater are off for that trip round the world. Needn't bother about them for a bit, and, later on, when they do know, they won't be able to alter it without a lot of fuss. There's no one else who's concerned—no one else who can possibly bowl us out. We don't know any fellows at either school."

"There's Dr. Holmes, the Head of St. Jim's. He's seen me. He'd spot the difference."

"He only saw you for a minute or two. That's nothing."

"Might not be if we were exactly alike. But you're ever so much fairer than I am."

"No odds! I can put that right. I've got the stuff here to do it. And the old bouncer at the Grammar School has never seen me, so he won't smell a rat. We shall have to change names, of course. From this on you're Claude and I'm Arnold. Why, it's as easy as falling off a form!"

"But I haven't said I agree. I don't agree."

"Rats! What's it matter to you? You say Rylcombe Grammar School is no end of a decent place. Well, you

go there. I don't think so. I prefer St. Jim's, and I'll go there!"

"You can't do it, Claude!"

"Yes, I can, Claude! Don't stare! You're Claude, I tell you, and I'm Arnold."

Already Arnold Wrayson was weakening.

His brother's ascendancy over him dated back to old days in the nursery. Claude had been a bold and forward child, Arnold rather a timid and backward one. Claude had led and Arnold had followed.

As they grew older Arnold's timidity had disappeared, and Claude's boldness had revealed itself as something that was not exactly bravery.

But for Arnold the old glamour held, though he knew it foolish that it should. No one was better aware than he what a rotter his brother was. Yet he had never ceased to be fond of Claude, to be swayed by him.

He was swayed now.

He would not have grumbled at being sent to Rylcombe Grammar School. He did not greatly mind the notion of going there now, though the manner of going was not to his liking.

With fascinated eyes he watched, while Claude produced from the small bag he carried a bottle of some dark liquid and a camel-hair brush.

"I say, Claude, old man, don't play the fool!" he urged.

"If you get that stuff on your hair you won't get it off in a giddy hurry!"

"Don't want to," answered Claude.

He had brought out an old pair of gloves; but before he put them on he touched up his eyebrows with the brush dipped into the dye.

"How's that look?" he asked.

"Rotten!" returned Arnold.

But Claude, contemplating himself in the small mirror under the luggage rack, grinned in a self-satisfied manner.

Now he put on the gloves.

"Can't afford to get the stuff all over my hands," he remarked.

"Don't be an idiot, Claude! The thing's gone beyond a joke!"

"Did I say it was a joke? I'm in dead earnest. And you'd better dry up with your 'Claude.' I'm Arnold now—not that it matters much. We'll both be just 'Wrayson'—you at the Grammar School, and I at St. Jim's. Shut your eyes till I've done, and then tell me what you think of it."

Arnold did not shut his eyes. He stared out of the window again.

He was not quite as upset as might have been expected. Claude had done so many queer things, most of them much worse than this.

He did not like the change of names. His name had always been kept clean. No one at the two schools from which his brother had had to leave thought of Wrayson minor as the same sort of fellow as Wrayson major, though Claude's misdoings had prevented Arnold from taking the place at either school that he might have taken.

But if this was going to help Claude he would not kick. And, as his brother had said, the Christian names really did not matter, and there would be no longer a Wrayson major and a Wrayson minor.

"Finished!" yelled Claude.

Arnold turned and fairly gasped. For the moment it was as though he saw himself, so much difference had the change of colouring made. Their mother or father, the servants at home, friends of the family who knew them both well, the fellows who had called Claude "Rotter Wrayson"—only for just a moment could they have been deceived. But a comparative stranger might easily have mistaken one for the other.

"Think I'll do, Claude?"

"I suppose so," replied Arnold. "But don't call me that. I hate it. The thing's a swindle, really, and that seems like rubbing it in."

"Right-ho, Wrayson, of Rylcombe Grammar School! Behold Wrayson of St. Jim's!" chuckled Claude.

CHAPTER 2.

A Fine Start!

"W RAYSON? Ah, yes!" said Mr. Railton, master of the School House. "You are the new boy for the Fourth Form."

He shook hands with Wrayson, giving him a keen glance as he did so.

Mr. Railton fancied that the new boy winced under that glance. He was right. In the ordinary way Claude Wrayson

had hardihood enough for anything. But just now, as he stood in the Housemaster's study, he was nervous about the dye. It had run a little before he got out of the train, and Arnold had told him of it.

His right hand moved towards his handkerchief now, but he remembered in time that there were stains on the handkerchief, and that to produce it might arouse suspicion.

"There is a boy here with whom you are already acquainted, and as you are to be in the same Form I have provisionally allotted you to his study," went on the Housemaster.

"I don't know anyone here, sir," answered Wrayson, rather sullenly.

"Perhaps you were not aware of his being here. His name is Trimble, and he comes from your town. Mellish shares the study with him. We are very full in the Fourth just now, and some studies have as many as four occupants."

Mr. Railton had not altogether liked the notion of putting a new boy with Baggy Trimble and Percy Mellish, two of the rankest outsiders in the Fourth.

But it had been difficult to see where else to put him. And now that the Housemaster had seen Wrayson he had a feeling that the three might get on very well together.

"Oh, I remember the name now, sir," said the new boy, "though I'm not sure that I really know the fellow."

He knew the name, though the Trimbles were very unimportant people at home compared with the Wraysons. Baggy Trimble was accustomed to brag of Trimble Hall. Those who had seen Baggy's family residence knew that it was a perfectly respectable villa of moderate size in a street of perfectly respectable villas all very much like it. But the Wraysons' home stood on the hill above the town, in wide grounds of its own.

"You will probably find that you do," said Mr. Railton. "Come in!"

Someone had tapped at the door. It opened, and Wrayson stared at the elegant monocled youth who entered.

"Ah, D'Arcy!" said the Housemaster.

"I took the liberty of lookin' in, sir, to see whether I could be of any use in showin' the new fellow the wopes," said the swell of the Fourth in his most stately manner.

"That was very considerate of you, D'Arcy," said Mr. Railton. "This is Wrayson, the new boy."

"Pleased to meet you, Wrayson!" said Arthur Augustus, extending a perfectly manicured hand.

Wrayson shook it. But he did not look at all as though he was pleased to meet D'Arcy. The mention of Trimble had rather scared him.

"Will you take Wrayson to join Trimble and Mellish, whose study he is to share?" said the Housemaster.

"With pleasuah, sir," replied Arthur Augustus.

But he looked at Wrayson as though he felt rather sorry for him; and the new boy scowled involuntarily, resenting the look.

The moment they were outside the Housemaster's study Wrayson brought out his handkerchief, selected a clean spot, and rubbed his hair in the neighbourhood of his ears. He was relieved to find that there was no sign of the dye upon it.

Arthur Augustus wondered at that strange proceeding, but his perfect politeness prevented him from asking any questions.

"Heah we are!" he said, when, without another word, they had reached the door of Study No. 2 in the Fourth Form passage. "I will introduce you if you like, Wrayson."

"You needn't. Trimble says he knows me, though I don't really know him. Don't trouble to come in."

Wrayson's manner was by no means ingratiating, and Arthur Augustus left him without regret.

"But new fellows are often queeah," said D'Arcy to himself. "I have no doubt that Wrayson will improve on acquaintance, and I will look him up again vewy soon."

The new boy pushed open the door of the study, and recognised Baggy Trimble at a glance.

Baggy's fat figure was not one easily to be forgotten. Wrayson had often seen it. But he had not known that St. Jim's was Trimble's school, and had not even been aware that Baggy was a Trimble.

"Hallo, Wrayson!" cried Baggy. "Welcome to St. Jim's, old chap! I heard you were coming, and put in a word with Railton—I stand well with him, you know. This is Mellish. We three ought to get along together like a house on fire."

Mellish, shaking hands, saw nothing in Wrayson's looks to encourage the idea that Study No. 2 would be the happier for his coming.

"Sulky looking bounder," thought Mellish.

Baggy rubbed his podgy hands together and beamed upon the newcomer.

Baggy cherished high hopes from the advent of Wrayson. Study No. 2 ought to be a land flowing with milk and honey if the new fellow were as well supplied with cash as the son of such wealthy parents should be.

"Just going to have tea," said Baggy. "Pull up a chair, old fellow!"

Wrayson was ready for tea, and he responded to the invitation.

"Sardines or salmon?" Baggy asked.

"I'll start on sardines, thanks."

As Wrayson helped himself liberally Baggy winked at Mellish, with a wink that implied the sure faith that all this would be returned with interest later.

Mellish hoped so. But Mellish was something of a pessimist, and he did not think Wrayson looked the open-hearted sort.

"Of course, when I said I knew you I was stretching it a

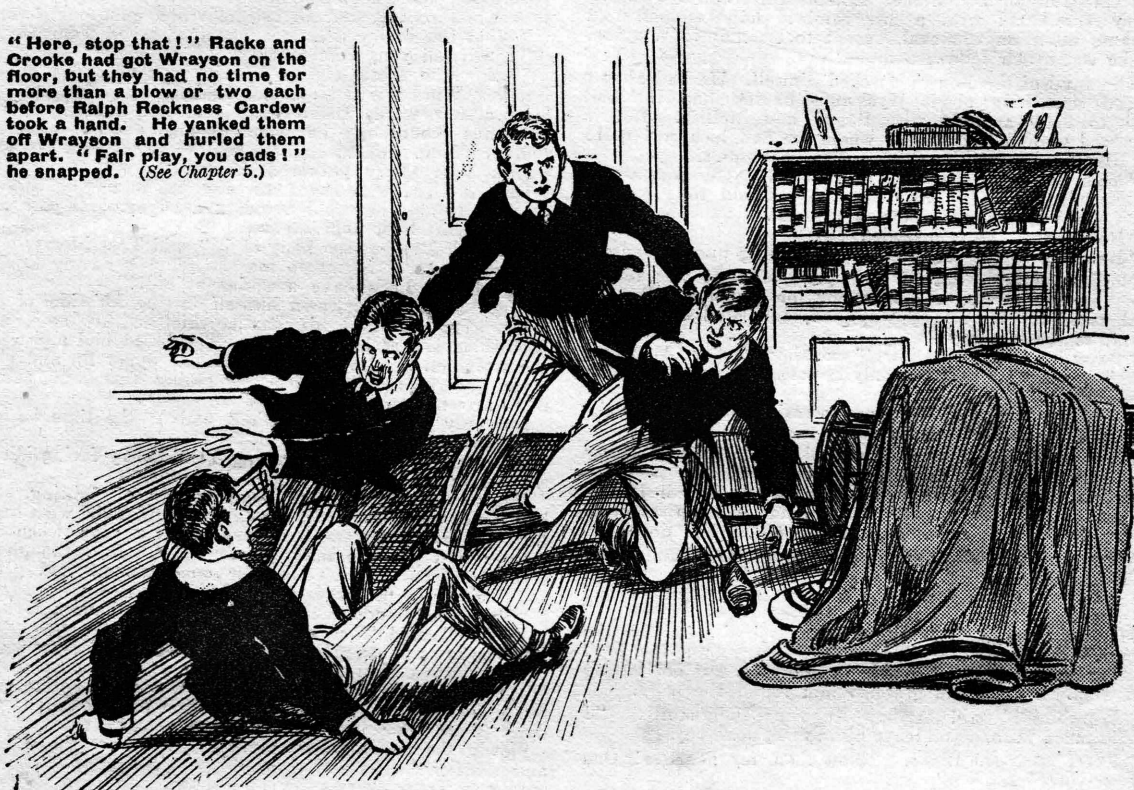
the uptake; but he had tumbled now to that threatening grip on the loaf.

"Thank you for nothing! I should think you'd better keep your paws off the loaf," said Wrayson. "I suppose Mellish doesn't care to have his grub touched by anything as filthy as they are, and I know I don't. Do you ever wash them?"

Baggy subsided at that. He began to fear that he and Wrayson would never be true pals. He was half inclined to wish that the other brother had come along. He might have been more agreeable.

During the rest of the meal Wrayson and Mellish

"Here, stop that!" Racker and Crooke had got Wrayson on the floor, but they had no time for more than a blow or two each before Ralph Reckness Cardew took a hand. He yanked them off Wrayson and hurled them apart. "Fair play, you cads!" he snapped. (See Chapter 5.)



little," Baggy remarked. "But I'd seen you so many times that I felt as though I did know you—see?"

"I've seen you a good many times, too," replied Wrayson.

Mellish grinned. The new boy's tone seemed to suggest that the sight of Baggy had given Wrayson no pleasure.

"It's lucky that it's you who has come to St. Jim's, and not your brother," went on Baggy.

Both Wrayson and Mellish stared at that speech. The new boy plainly did not like it, and Mellish thought it a rummy thing to say.

Baggy, who had the tact of a hippopotamus, blundered on. "We couldn't have stood him, you know," he said, shaking his head. "We've no use for his sort at St. Jim's."

"Eh? What the thump do you mean?" demanded Wrayson fiercely.

"Oh, don't get your wool off, old fellow! I'm not talking about you, you know. Your brother's a very different chap."

"What do you know about my brother, you fat cad?" snarled the new boy.

"Here, I say! Oh, really, I didn't mean to offend you! Nobody thinks that you're responsible for what he's done, do they? And I wouldn't say a blessed word before anyone but Mellish. We're going to be pals, we three, so it won't matter about Mellish's knowing that your—"

"Dry up! Do you hear? Dry up, or I'll give you a thick ear!"

"Better dry up, Baggy!" said Mellish warningly.

Mellish did not like the look of Wrayson. He had a very uncertain temper; there could be no doubt about that. It was brought home to Baggy Trimble, too, the next moment, for Wrayson grabbed at a loaf on the table and turned on the fat Fourth-Former in a threatening attitude.

"I— Oh, beg pardon, Wrayson! I won't say any more about what an outsider your brother is, though of course everyone round our way—"

"Are you going to dry up?" roared Wrayson.

"Yes—oh, yes! I say, old man, shall I cut you another slice of bread?"

Again Mellish grinned. Baggy was not usually quick on

exchanged a few very ordinary remarks; but Baggy sat mum. As it chanced, the spread on the table came from one of his very rare hampers from home, and the manner in which the new fellow piled in did not delight him.

They had just finished when Arthur Augustus looked in again. In the kindness of his heart he wanted to give Wrayson another chance to show that he could be civil.

But Wrayson was not feeling civil.

"Gettin' along all wight, W'ayson, deah boy?" asked the swell of the Fourth cheerily. "Beginnin' to find your feet, what?"

Wrayson grunted.

"See here, what's put it into your head that I want to be patronised by you?" he snorted. "I'm no raw hand. I've been to school before, and I don't need a dry nurse, thanks!"

Arthur Augustus stiffened. Second impressions were merely confirming first, whereas he had hoped that they might change them.

"Weally, since that is your tone," he said, "I wegwet that I should have twoubled you. I can only assuah you that it was done with no ultewiah object watevah. It is poss. that you imagine me one of those wottahs who chum up to a new fellow with the hope of spongin' on him. Twimble and Mellish heah can—"

"Oh, chuck it, you blessed tailor's dummy!"

Arthur Augustus elevated his celebrated monocle, and through it gave Wrayson a comprehensive survey from head to foot that should have made him wilt.

It did not have that effect, however. It merely made Wrayson angrier than ever. What Baggy had said had roused him to fury, and he had not yet calmed down.

"Take that giddy pane of glass out of your eye!" he shouted. "What do you mean by sticking your nose in here? For two pins I'd—"

"Bai Jove! Unless you modewate your tone, W'ayson, I shall be compelled to administah a feahful thwashin'!" said the swell of the Fourth, wrathfully.

That was too much for Wrayson. He dashed his fist into D'Arcy's face just as the door opened, and Jack Blake, Herries, and Digby came in.

The blow was utterly unexpected. It smashed the monocle, and a sliver of glass cut the cheek of the swell of St. Jim's, drawing blood.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" exclaimed Blake. "Who's this blessed tiger, Mellish?"

Wrayson drew back, his hands clenched, his eyes gleaming. There really was something that suggested a beast of prey about him at that moment.

"This is my biznay, Blake," said Arthur Augustus, wiping away the blood with a fine cambric handkerchief. "I had no intention whatevah except to be civil to W'ayson, as he was a new fellow, and—"

The swell of the Fourth checked himself. He had almost added something about Wrayson's having had the bad luck to share a study with Baggy and Mellish. But it occurred to him that on the whole the bad luck was quite as likely to be on their side as on Wrayson's.

"Your bizney, be hanged!" said Blake. "This chap wants a lesson! He might have blinded you, old top!"

"Let's bump him!" growled Herries.

"Good egg!" agreed Digby.

"Bumping it is!" said Blake, advancing upon Wrayson.

Neither Trimble nor Mellish protested. It was rather early in the career of a new boy for bumping. But he had asked for it. Baggy was glad, and Mellish was not sorry, to see him get it.

"Pway hold on, you fellows!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "This is a mattah that can only be settled between W'ayson and myself!"

But this was one of the many occasions on which Blake & Co. disagreed with their noble chum.

They were indignant at that foul blow. Even if Gussy was silly ass enough to think himself entitled to play the guardian angel to every new junior in the School House, it was all kindly meant, and no one but an absolute rotter would have resented it as this fellow had done.

Wrayson had drawn back into a corner. His hands were still clenched, and his teeth showed. He looked as though he were prepared to face the four of them. But he had no chance to show fight.

Herries, long and strong of arm, seized him by the wrists. Digby ducked and caught him round the legs, getting a knee under his chin in doing so, but not letting out a murmur. Blake grabbed him round the body.

"I pwotest!" said Arthur Augustus indignantly. "I would much wathah you leave him to me, deah boys!"

"Rats!" snapped Blake. "Now then, my hearties! One—two—three—and—"

Bump!

Bumping as a punishment among equals is not peculiar to St. Jim's; but it had not been in vogue at any school Wrayson had attended, and his first experience of it was one that he was never likely to forget.

His face was livid with rage, his eyes almost starting out of his head. He opened his mouth to yell, when—

Bump!

He smote the floor again, and for the moment had no breath left for yelling.

A third bump the three gave him. Then they relaxed their hold.

It was quite a moderate bumping. Baggy had had many a worse. But it seemed to have sent Wrayson almost insane.

He snatched at Digby's leg, dragged him down, and drove his knee hard into the region of his waistcoat.

"Ouch!" gasped Digby, winded and white with pain.

"Oh, you cad!" yelled Blake.

"Hallo! What's up here?" sounded a voice at the door, which was still ajar.

"Leave him to me, Blake! I tell you that it is my wight to deal with the boundah!"

Arthur Augustus, without realising just what he was doing, had got in Blake's way. Herries, trying to rush round the table, collided with Baggy, who started forward at that moment. Mellish, ever prudent in time of trouble, had withdrawn himself into a corner.

"You silly fat ass!" howled Herries, as he crashed down on top of Baggy.

"Yoooop! Gerroff! You'll suffocate me!" roared Baggy.

"What's wrong?" asked Tom Merry, staring into the study in amazement.

"My aunt! Is this St. Jim's, or is it a criminal lunatic asylum?" inquired Lowther.

It was Manners, happening to be ahead, who caught Wrayson by the collar and yanked him off Digby.

The new fellow wrenched himself free. He thrust an

elbow into D'Arcy's chest, swung round, and hacked Manners viciously on the shin.

The next moment Manners' left shot out straight from the shoulder, as hard a blow as ever he had given anyone in his life, and Wrayson crashed to the floor.

Manners had never before seen the fellow whom he punched. But he had seen him strike Digby in the face while kneeling on his stomach, and the fellow had kicked his shins.

Manners considered an introduction unnecessary after that.

Wrayson had had enough. He scrambled up; but his nose was bleeding, and all the fight had gone out of him.

"What the thump does it all mean?" asked Tom Merry.

"I will tell you, Tom Mewwy! I—"

"Life's too short, Gussy!" broke in the leader of the Shell. "What was it all about, Blake?"

In a few words Blake explained, and though Arthur Augustus would not be silenced, and Baggy, wheezing and groaning, chimed in here and there, it was not long before Tom Merry gathered the truth.

Only Mellish, who never saw any use in mixing himself up with trouble he could avoid, and Digby, still pale and shaky on his legs, kept silence.

"I think I've got the hang of it," said Tom Merry, with knitted brows. "Seems to me the fellow's hardly safe to have about. Let's have a squint at him!"

Wrayson had withdrawn himself to the far side of the table. He still had his handkerchief to his nose, and Mellish looked at him curiously. The blood had moistened the stains on the linen, and Wrayson's upper lip and chin were queerly streaked with something that was rather more brown than red.

But only Mellish noticed that, and at the time he did not know what to make of it.

The rest cleared aside, leaving Tom Merry facing Wrayson across the table.

Wrayson had had more than enough of fighting. He had never cared for that, though he could fight with brute ferocity and complete disregard of fair play when his temper had got the mastery over him. But, though he wanted no more blows like the one Manners had given him, he was by no means subdued.

"Take that handkerchief away, and let's have a look at your dial!" said Tom Merry, sharply.

"Who are you, to give me orders?" snarled Wrayson.

"My name's Merry, and I'm junior captain of St. Jim's. It's not much in my line to talk about what authority I have. But I have some, and I tell you plainly that if you don't show your face you'll be made to!"

Slowly the handkerchief came away. Above the stained and streaky cheeks and chin, Wrayson's baleful, gleaming eyes met Tom Merry's for an instant, and then dropped before them.

"Seen enough?" asked Wrayson. "I thought you must be a prefect at least, as you're too young to be a master," he went on with a sneer. "Junior captain may sound all right, but I shouldn't think it cuts much ice. You've heard what this crowd had to say. What about it?"

"Only that you've made a rotten bad start here, Wrayson, and that if you go on as you've begun you'll find St. Jim's rather an uncomfortable place. We've no sort of use for fellows who scrap as you've been doing."

"Seems to me, Thomas, that Wrayson has already received tolerably broad hints that his methods are not popular," remarked Lowther.

"Seems to me he's the sort of utter outsider that it's no use warning," growled Manners.

"Hear, hear!" came from Blake and Herries.

Digby left the study, still saying nothing. He did not want to go; but the effects of the brutal pounding of Wrayson's knee upon his waistcoat would not be shaken off.

"I dare say you're right," said Tom Merry. "But it's my duty to make things quite clear to him. That's all for the present, Wrayson!"

And the captain of the Shell walked out, followed by Lowther and Manners.

Blake and Herries delayed a moment or so, for they had to remove their noble chum by main force.

"I considah that I have a wight to demand satisfaction ffrom W'ayson!" persisted Arthur Augustus, still dabbling at his face, down which blood trickled the moment he removed his handkerchief. "It was a foul blow he stwuck me, and—"

"Kim on! Haven't you seen enough to know that he's the sort that always does fight foul?" said Blake. "If you have a right to force him to fight so has Dig, and so has Manners. What will there be left of him after you've all three put him through it, I'd like to know?"

"Less left the better," growled Herries. "But come on, Gussy, you fathead! You can't fight him now, anyway."

"No, but—oh, bai Jove! Welease me, you wottahs!"

But Blake and Herries had caught him by the arms, and between him they marched him out.

Baggy closed the door after them.

"My hat, you've made a fine start at St. Jim's, Wrayson!" he said, a fat grin on his face.

"Cheese it, Baggy!" said Mellish. "I'm not saying Wrayson was right. But when a lot of fellows pile on to one chap it can't be wondered at if the chap gets his wool off a bit."

Baggy stared at his study mate in amazement.

Mellish was craftier than Baggy.

Wrayson's bad temper at tea and his half-insane fury afterwards had made Baggy feel for the time being that he was impossible as a friend.

But Mellish had not had the rough side of Wrayson's tongue. And Mellish did not really mind D'Arcy's face being cut and Manners' shin being kicked and Digby's waistcoat being knelt upon.

He did not exult. He was only spiteful when he had anything definite against a fellow. But he wasted no sympathy on the sufferers.

And he had not yet made up his mind that Wrayson could be of no use to him.

CHAPTER 3.

A Pal for Wrayson!

WRAYSON rather expected a display of hostility in the dormitory that night.

But there was nothing of the kind. No one took any particular notice of him.

A look of evil satisfaction appeared on the new boy's face as he saw Digby get into bed, evidently still feeling queer. He looked around for Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther, for he did not as yet properly appreciate the fact that the Fourth and the Shell were separate Forms.

They were not to be seen. But his eyes fell upon someone whom he fancied he recognised.

Could it be the same fellow?

It was very like him, anyway, allowing for the changes that three or four years would naturally make.

Here was another complication!

But after lights out, when the hum of talk in the dormitory had died away, he began to think that it was not so bad, after all.

To Ralph Reckness Cardew, as to St. Jim's in general, he was Arnold Wrayson. The rest of the school, except Baggy Trimble, and Mellish through him, knew nothing of Claude. Cardew had barely seen him. Cardew was certain to take the Wrayson he met now as Arnold.

At the worst, he was prepared to meet Cardew. He would not be taken by surprise.

Next morning he found Mellish ready to put him wise as to anything he did not know. Baggy did not speak to him, feeling just a little scared of a fellow with such a terrible temper as Wrayson's. Mellish and Wrayson went in to breakfast together in the Hall, and later sought the Fourth Form-room in company; and it was Mellish who made the new fellow known to Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth.

During the morning break, Cardew came up to Wrayson. His scrutiny was so keen that Wrayson's eyes fell before it, as they had done before Mr. Railton's though not for quite the same reason. Wrayson no longer worried about the dye. It had not left a mark on his pillow.

"Must be you!" said Cardew, putting out his hand. "Might have looked me up, old chap! After all, you haven't saved so many lives, I suppose, that you've forgotten the faces of the fellows concerned?"

"I didn't see you till we were in the dormitory, and then I didn't hear your name," replied Wrayson. "I couldn't be quite sure, could I? And it would hardly have been the thing to come along and tell you that because I hap-

pened to pull you out of the wafer three or four years ago, I expected you to make a pal of me at once."

That was the sort of thing Arnold Wrayson would have thought, though he might not so easily have put it into words, as the wrong Wrayson did.

Cardew's mind had gone back to a broad stretch of ice, broken in one place, where he struggled for dear life, the brittle ice breaking as he clutched at it, and letting him down again into the black water. He saw again the little group of skaters who had drawn together to watch, in awed silence, the plucky youngster who crawled towards him along a ladder laid upon the ice. The skaters were nearly all boys and girls, and there had been few of them, for the pool was in private grounds; but his rescuer had been one of the youngest there.

They had never met again, for the Wraysons had only been over at Cleeve Manor for the day with friends, and Cardew himself was but a visitor, for a short time, at a house nearby. But Cardew had not forgotten either the fellow who had rescued him, or the other, his brother no doubt, from the likeness, who had stood by, close to the bank, without stirring a hand to help. Not that Cardew had held it against him, any more than he had held it against the rest of the skaters—of whom he could remember now, only the girl cousin with whom he had come—that no aid had been forthcoming from them.

Cardew knew that the combination of courage and presence of mind which Arnold Wrayson had shown that day was no common thing. It was only the likeness between the two brothers which had caused him to remember Claude.

And now he had no doubt that it was Arnold he saw, though somehow the way the new boy's eyes had fallen before Cardew's keen gaze, had seemed queer in one so ready of courage.

Claude's words had wiped out that doubt.

"It might not be for you to say, old fellow; but I think it's up to me to say it," answered Cardew warmly. "After all, a man doesn't have his giddy life saved every day. How does St. Jim's strike you?"

Wrayson shrugged his shoulders.

"Can't say I'm taken with it at present."

"Oh, there are worse places, y'know!" said Cardew.

He had heard nothing yet about the trouble of the evening before. There had been more than a little talk about

it; but that talk had not chanced to reach his ears.

It had reached Levison's, however.

And now, observing Cardew in friendly talk with the fellow whom many in the Shell and Fourth had already labelled a rank outsider, Levison said to Clive:

"What does Cardew want with that rotter?"

Clive looked round.

"New chap," he said. "Cardew doesn't usually go out of his way to do the civil to new fellows. But why do you say he's a rotter, Ernest?"

"Haven't you heard? That's the bounder who smashed Gussy's monocle and cut his cheek, used his knee on Digby so ferociously that Dig can hardly sit up straight this morning, and kicked Manners' shins, and got knocked down for it!"

"He doesn't sound quite nice," answered the South African junior, grinning. "I shan't be in a hurry to pal up with him, I promise you. But Cardew can't know."

"Then the sooner he's told, the better!" growled Levison. There was no chance to tell him then. The bell rang at that moment, and Cardew and the impostor returned to the Form-room together.

Levison was worried. Both he and Clive thought a heap of their wayward chum, Ralph Reckness Cardew.

He angered them often, and worried them even oftener.

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Clive failed half the time to understand him; and even the keener Levison was often puzzled by him.

All St. Jim's knew him full of courage and wonderfully generous—at times. The Shell and the Fourth knew better than the rest of St. Jim's how utterly his generosity seemed to fail at other times; how obstinate and callous and even cruel he could seem, till at some pinch he would reveal himself in his true colours.

If they were his true colours! Even Levison and Clive had often been puzzled as to that.

But they held by him. There had been periods of estrangement. There would be again, doubtless. But since the three had come to share Study No. 9 there had never been a time when Ernest Levison and Sidney Clive had not wanted to be Cardew's friends.

Cardew's desk in the Form-room was not next to Levison's. If it had been Levison would have whispered to him what he wrote on a slip of paper after they were back.

"Don't pal up to that chap Wrayson. He's the wrong sort."

That was what Levison wrote. He reckoned on explaining his meaning later.

The twisted scrap of paper on which the words were written was passed along to Cardew.

Levison watched out of the corner of an eye his reception of the warning.

When he saw his chum frown slightly, lift his eyebrows, shrug his shoulders, and tear the scrap of paper into fragments, without even a glance at the writer, Levison wished he had delayed the warning till he could have made it clear why he gave it.

Now he knew that he had aroused Cardew's obstinacy. There was nothing Cardew hated more than to have anyone trying to guide his steps.

When Mr. Lathom dismissed the Form Levison tried to reach Cardew before he joined Wrayson.

But he failed.

Cardew and the new fellow left the Form-room side by side. In the passage Cardew linked his arm with Wrayson's, and walked off with him.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus to Blake. "I weally think Cardew ought to be told what an uttah outsidah that new boundah is! I am not wefewwin' so much to the mannah in which he tweated me, though I still considah that I owe him a feahful thwashin' for that. But he was vewy wuff on poor old Dig, and he kicked Mannahs' shins. I dwaw the line once and for all at a wottah who kicks a fellow's shins!"

"Same here!" said Blake. "But it's no use talking to Cardew."

That was very much what Clive said to Levison.

"We needn't be chummy with him because Cardew is," Clive remarked. "And trying to lead Ralph is like trying to drive a pig. The only way to do it is to get into his head that the way you don't want him to go is the way you do."

"Rats!" said Levison. "And, anyway, it's too late for that. I wrote a line or two in class to tell Cardew that he was a wrong 'un."

"And see the result! The obstinate ass goes off arm-in-arm with him!"

Levison's brow darkened, not merely because Cardew and Wrayson had gone off together, but also because he resented the fact that Clive's simple shrewdness seemed wiser to him now than his own self-counsel.

"Come along and have a look round the show," said Cardew to the new fellow. "There are worse holes, as I've told you."

"I say, Cardew!"

Claude Wrayson gave the slacker of the Fourth a half-furtive glance as he spoke.

"Yaas, dear boy!"

"I say, I'd rather you didn't tell the other fellows about that—about what happened at Cleeve."

Claude Wrayson hardly knew what prompted him to make that request. It was certainly no reluctance to stalk in borrowed plumes. A false reputation for courage would have suited him as well as a real one, if it might only last.

Perhaps there was in him a dread that if ever his imposture was found out, it would seem to everyone a hundred times worse because he had accepted general credit for a brave deed he had not done.

"One of the modest heroes, eh, Wrayson?" said Cardew, with a smile that made it obvious the words held no sneer. "I don't mind, old top. I shan't forget, an' if you don't want other fellows to know, you can have it your own way, old top!"

Another fellow would have been keen to explain matters to Levison, but not Cardew. He knew his chum's warning was well meant, yet resented it. The notion of keeping Levison in the dark rather appealed to him.

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"Thanks!" said Wrayson. "I thought you might not mind. After all, it's not worth gassing about."

Doing his best to persuade himself that those words rang true, Cardew could not quite manage it. He was to have that difficulty more than once in his future dealings with the fellow to whom he believed he owed his life.

"Where have they put you?" he asked. "What's your study, I mean?"

Plainly Cardew had heard nothing of the trouble of the previous evening. Wrayson thought it a stroke of luck that news of it should not have reached him till after he had offered the right hand of friendship to the newcomer who had been at the bottom of it all.

"With Trimble and Mellish," he answered, his lip curling.

"Rough luck! If I'd known you were comin' I'd have put in a word with Railton."

"That's what Trimble did, the fat sweep! He comes from near my home, and had the idea that he might make something out of chumming up with me. He'll find himself dashed well out of it, though!"

"Baggy is rather like that. Baggy's a born sponger, an' can't help it."

"What about Mellish?" inquired Wrayson.

The Fourth in general barred Percy Mellish, and Cardew barred him as thoroughly as anyone. But he did not care to speak as plainly of Mellish as he had done of Baggy.

One was giving nothing away in saying that Baggy was a sponger. Baggy himself revealed that fact to any new acquaintance in very short time. But the faults of Mellish were less on the surface. To run down a fellow behind his back was not one of Cardew's little ways.

"Oh, Mellish isn't quite like Baggy," was his answer.

"I dare say you'll be hearing things about me before long," said Wrayson, after a brief pause in the talk. "I'd a rotten headache when I got here yesterday, and I wasn't in the best of tempers. Trimble annoyed me, and then that chap D'Arcy butted in."

"My noble kinsman can be a nuisance," murmured Cardew.

"Eh? Is D'Arcy a relative of yours? I didn't know that. Can't help it, anyway."

"Don't apologise, dear boy. The connection is distant, an' even if it were closer, I shouldn't exactly consider a biff in the eye given to Gussy as the same thing with one given to me."

"That's queer! Your saying that, I mean. For, as it happens, I did biff D'Arcy in the eye. And I happened to smash his rotten monocle—silly swank I call it—and everybody seemed to think I'd done it on purpose. Rot!"

"Rot, no doubt, dear boy," agreed Cardew. "You wouldn't do anything so dangerous, I'm sure. I remember now that my noble kinsman's cheek was adorned with plaster this mornin'. But who were the 'everybody' who condemned you?"

"Fellow named Blake, and another called Digby, and—I can't call to mind the big, clumsy boulder's name."

"That would be Herries. Knowing Blake, Digby, an' Herries, I should not be surprised to hear that they were nasty with you when they found you'd biffed their Gussy in the eye an' smashed his giddy monocle."

There was a vengeful light in Wrayson's eyes as he replied:

"They bumped me—that was what they called it, the sweeps! I don't think they'll try it on me again in a hurry!"

"An' what measures did you take to guard against that contingency?"

"I knocked Digby down and gave him something to be going on with!"

"Digby, eh?"

Cardew would have been better pleased to hear that it had been Blake or Herries. It was not that he wished harm to either. But Digby, though no weakling, was considerably smaller than the sturdy Blake or the burly Herries.

But perhaps it had not been a matter of choice.

"Then three more bounders blew in. My blood was fairly up by this time. One of them dragged me off Digby, and I turned round and hit him. He let out at me, and I stumbled over Digby and came down whack."

"Who were these three?"

"One of them said his name was Tom Happy——"

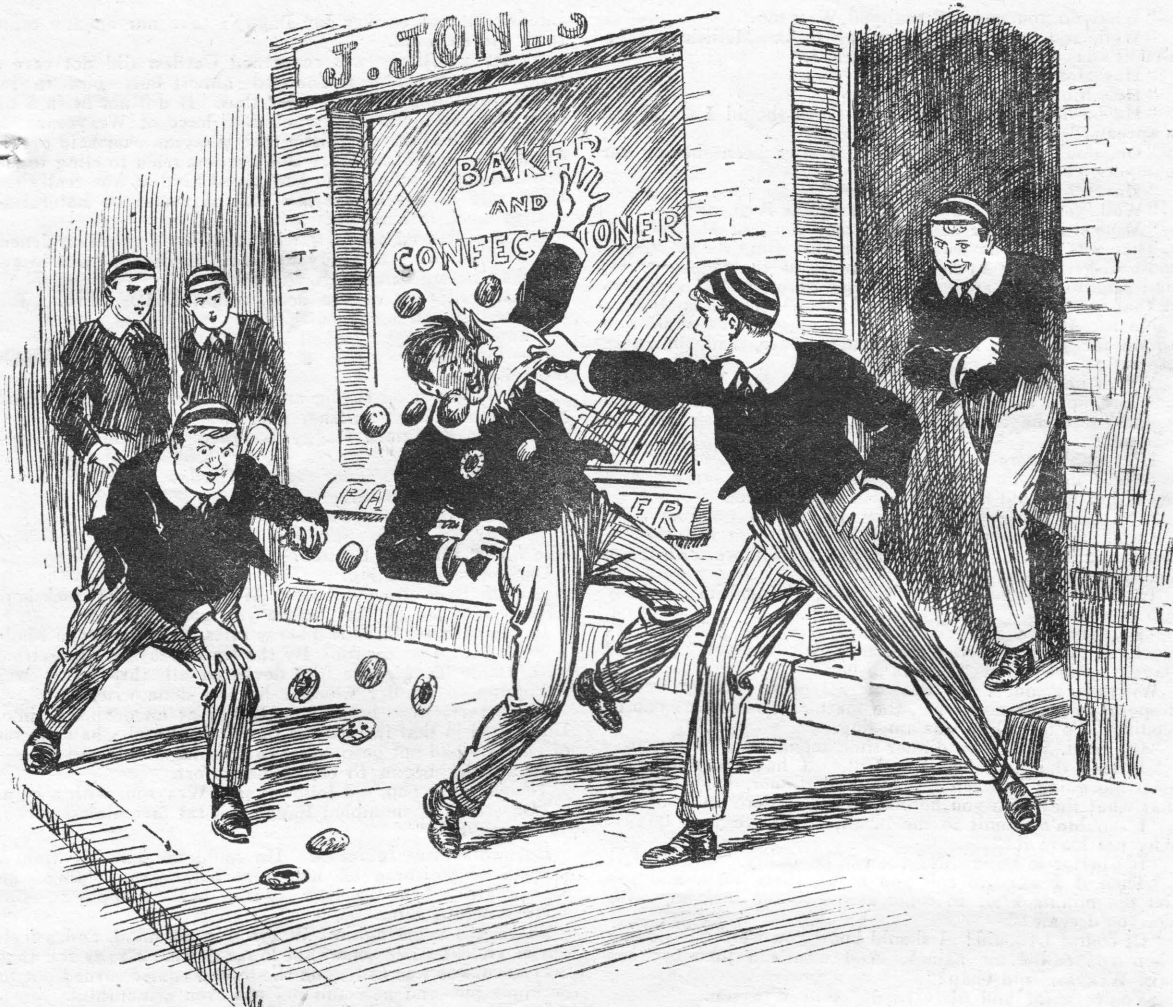
"Merry, I think, dear boy!"

"That's it—and that he was the junior captain. I told him from the way he talked I'd taken him for a prefect at least, as he wasn't old enough to be a master."

Cardew whistled softly.

"What's the matter?" snapped Wrayson.

"Only that you've somehow managed to fall foul of most of our leadin' citizens, old top! Tom Merry an' Manners an' Lowther are among the chief personages in the Shell. Blake an' his crowd are no small potatoes in the Fourth. Never mind!"



"St. Jim's boulder!" howled Carboy. He made a grab at Herries' cap, but the Fourth-Former dodged and swung round his bag. Squelch! The bag burst, and Carboy's face almost disappeared beneath its smashed contents. "Yoooop!" he howled. (See Chapter 7.)

"I suppose you mean that you don't want to be chummy with such a quarrelsome boulder as you think I am?"

"If I'd meant that I'd have said it straight out, Wrayson. I don't mean it, or anythin' at all like it."

"Are those fellows pals of yours?"

"I have somethin' more than a noddin' acquaintance with them. But my pals are Levison an' Clive. They share No. 9 with me. Come to tea this afternoon, an' see if you can get on with them."

"All right. It will be a relief to get away from that fat toad Trimble."

Levison and Clive had gone down to the nets for cricket practice. It was not until after dinner that Cardew had a chance to tell them of the invitation he had given.

Then Levison stared at him.

"I don't like this, Cardew!" he said. "I told you the fellow was no good. I'm not going to be chummy with him."

"May I ask, my worthy Ernest, what you have against him?"

"I'll tell you!"

Levison spoke out plainly. He had his story from both the Terrible Three and the fellows in No. 6, and there was no exaggeration in it.

Cardew shrugged his shoulders in the way that always irritated Levison.

"I've heard the chap's own account," he said. "It's not quite the same, y'know."

"I don't suppose it would be," returned Levison. "You may choose to believe a boulder you don't know. I prefer to believe decent fellows I do know. If Wrayson's coming here to tea, I shall clear out. I don't want to know him!"

"And you, Sidney?" asked Cardew blandly.

Clive hesitated. He was not prepared to go as far as Levison.

"Oh, I dare say I can stand the fellow for once," he said.

Later, he confessed to Levison that he did not want to have to stand him again.

And even Cardew, though he would not have admitted it, wished that the fellow whom he supposed to have saved his life had had pleasanter manners. Clive and Wrayson had not got on a bit well together, and Cardew had had to make mental excuses all the time for his new chum.

CHAPTER 4.

Baggy Finds Out Something!

"I SAY, Wrayson, old fellow!"

Claude Wrayson was standing on the top of the School House steps when that fat voice smote his ears. He turned to find Baggy Trimble rolling towards him.

The new boy had thought it best to disguise the contempt he felt for Baggy, and thus far he had got along very well with Mellish, so that No. 2 study had been more peaceful than might have been expected.

Baggy had overcome his fear of Wrayson's temper by this time; and it had occurred to Baggy that if ever he was to reap the advantage he had hoped for when he spoke to the Housemaster about the fellow from his town he ought to take steps to that end.

"Well?" returned Wrayson, coldly, but not uncivilly, as the fat Fourth-Former came up.

"Your people are jolly well off, aren't they?"

"I can't see that it's any affair of yours; but you must know very well that no one lives in a place like ours without having money."

"Are they stingy about your pocket-money?"

Wrayson's face should have warned Baggy not to carry on in this strain. But when Baggy felt a craving in his inner man his fat brain, never of first-class calibre, was apt to be duller than usual.

"What do you mean?" snapped Wrayson.
 "Well, you know, old fellow, we think—Mellish and I—that it's about time you stood a spread."

"Has Mellish said so?"
 "He's hinted it to me."
 "He hasn't to me. Why the dickens should I stand you a spread?"

"Oh, don't get your wool off! You've been sharing our hampers, you know, and—"

"Haven't you both shared mine?"
 "Well, yes. That's all right, as far as it goes."

"Mine was a better one than either yours or Mellish's."
 That was true. It was also true that Baggy had gorged most disgracefully upon the contents of that hamper. It had been made up at one of the big stores, with luxuries in it that were not included in the home-packed hampers that came for Mellish and Baggy. And Baggy was a positive whale for pate de fois gras, and caviare, and things in apic.

Yes, it had been a sumptuous hamper. But Wrayson did not love good things to eat as Baggy loved them; and he would rather have had the worth of that hamper than its contents.

His people were not stingy. But his pocket-money had been cut down to what seemed to him a pittance. And his father had told him very plainly the reason.

"I'm not going to give you money to gamble with, Claude. Show me that you can steer clear of that sort of thing and go straight, and you shall have more. To make this do may teach you a lesson."

That was what his father had said, giving him a measly two pounds.

"But you're a new chap, you know, and I haven't as much as been inside the tuckshop with you yet," pleaded Baggy pathetically. "I'm famished."

Wrayson grinned. It was a cruel grin. Baggy was so desperately in earnest when the matter at issue was one of feeding. To tease him was amusing.

"Oh, well, it will be dinner-time soon," said Wrayson.

"What's the use of that? Unless I have something to keep me going between brekker and dinner, I always feel that what they give you here is no better than an insult."

"I shouldn't submit to the insult, if I were you, Baggy. Why not leave it?"

"It's better to be insulted than to be empty," said Baggy.

"Then if I were to call you a fat, dirty toad, and ask you the minute after to come across to the tuckshop with me, you'd come?"

"Of course I should! I should know you were only joking when you called me names. And what's a joke between pals, Wrayson, old chap?"

"You're a fat and dirty toad!" said Wrayson.

"Oh, really, Wrayson, old chap—"

"Now will you come to the tuckshop?"

Baggy's half-awakened pride went fast asleep again.

"You bet!" he answered. "I knew it was only a joke!"

He waddled across the quad by Wrayson's side.

Cardew, Levison, and Clive were the only fellows at the counter. They were all in flannels, and were sampling Mrs. Taggles' ginger-pop after a strenuous hour.

"Hallo, old top!" said Cardew. "Baggy standing treat?"

Levison kept his back turned. Clive merely nodded to Wrayson.

"No, I'm doing that," Wrayson said. "Pop, Baggy?"

With greedy eyes on the rabbit-pies, the cakes, and the tarts, Baggy assented.

He gulped down the ginger-pop. Wrayson sipped at his glass.

"Another?" he asked.

Baggy had another, and breathed hard over it. Pop was all very well in its way; but he did not want to fill himself up with the stuff.

His mouth watered as he gazed upon the delicacies which Dame Taggles had ready. At a word from Wrayson his podgy hand would have shot out to grab something solid to start upon—a rabbit-pie, for choice.

A word came, but it was not the word the fat Fourth-Former was waiting for.

"Another?" inquired Wrayson, half-way through his first glass.

Baggy, still hoping, swallowed another big glass of the stuff, though he felt that in doing so he was offering his internal arrangements something that was of no use to them. Pop was all very well later on, when one had got so far that the etables needed a little washing-down. Three bottles of it to start with were altogether too much of a good thing. The attention of Cardew and the other two had been attracted.

They took it in very different ways.

To Clive it seemed a joke, though a pretty poor one.

Levison grinned sardonically. He could guess Wrayson's

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intentions, and neither for Baggy's sake nor on any other score did he mind.

As far as Baggy was concerned Cardew did not care a scrap. But somehow it annoyed—almost hurt—him to see Wrayson fooling the fat junior thus. It did not fit in a bit with the notion Cardew wanted to have of Wrayson.

For that matter, very little that Wrayson ever said or did fitted in with that notion. But Cardew tried to cling to the belief that the fellow who had saved his life was really the right sort at heart. He felt that it would be hateful to owe so much to a rotter.

Levison glanced at his watch, and Clive's grin broadened. "We shall have to hurry up," said Levison. "Got to get changed before dinner, you know."

He moved towards the door, followed by Clive. But Cardew lingered a moment.

"Another, Baggy?" asked Wrayson.

"I—I'd rather have a rabbit-pie," replied Trimble hungrily.

"Oh, it's no good eating anything now. You'd only spoil your dinner. Have another pop, do!"

And the egregious Baggy accepted, since he could get nothing better.

The first bell for dinner rang as Cardew, hurrying, joined his chums in the quad.

"He had Baggy on a string!" said Clive.

"Baggy's a greedy, fat idiot! But I wouldn't treat him like that," returned Levison.

Cardew said nothing.

"We'll have to cut," said Wrayson, in the tuckshop.

"Have a raspberry tart before you go?"

Baggy collared three raspberry tarts, and thrust one whole into his capacious mouth. By the time Wrayson had settled with Dame Taggles he had devoured all three, and was beginning to wonder whether he had done wisely.

Three tarts were nothing to Baggy at an ordinary time. But bolted in that fashion, on top of three and a half glasses of pop—he had not been equal to finishing the fourth glass—they already began to cause discomfort.

"Finish your pop, old fellow," said Wrayson, with a grin.

"Oh crumbs!" mumbled Baggy, his fat face almost green.

"I—I couldn't!"

But worse was to follow. He could not eat his dinner. Instead of polishing off his usual half-dozen helpings, he could hardly bear to look at the beef, dumplings, and carrots before him.

There was anger against Wrayson in his mind, and a feeling of violent strife somewhat lower down. Baggy felt that his cup of woe was full when the second course turned out to be apple pie, and he could not eat even a mouthful.

Levison had watched him keenly. Now he nudged Cardew.

"Trick's come off!" he said. "Baggy's baulking his fences."

"What's the odds?" returned Cardew. "It won't hurt Baggy to go without dinner for once. Do him good, I should say."

"I doubt whether Wrayson meant to do him good, though," said Levison.

Cardew did not answer that.

Baggy had to retire from the Form-room that afternoon. He pleaded a bad headache, and his face bore out the plea.

Mr. Lathom told him to go and lie down, Wrayson and Levison grinned in much the same way, though not with the same thoughts. For Wrayson was elated that his dodge had been a success, while Levison fancied this would show Cardew what a rotter Wrayson was.

But Clive did not grin. He thought the joke had been carried too far.

Baggy went to the dormitory, and lay down for half an hour or so. He felt too uncomfortable to rejoice over escaping Latin prose. But when the Forms were dismissed, and he heard the shouts in the quad, it seemed no longer worth while to lie there. He got up and looked out of the nearest window.

He saw Mellish going out of gates with Scrope. He wondered where Wrayson was.

No longer did he feel so disturbed internally. Indeed, he began to experience sensations of positive peckishness.

There was not much in the cupboard of Study No. 2, he knew. But he easily persuaded himself that he was entitled to anything he could find there.

He stole down, meeting no one on the way. The Fourth Form passage was empty. No sound came from most of the studies, for it was a fine, sunny afternoon, and most of the juniors were out of doors.

Trimble turned the knob of Study No. 2, but the door did not give to his push.

Most fellows would have pushed again, or would have called out to ask if there was anyone inside.

But Baggy had ways of his own. He stooped and applied his eye to the keyhole.

There were keyholes to the junior study doors, but there were no keys. That is to say, there were no officially permitted keys. It was an understood thing that study doors were not to be locked.

A chair back under the knob was the general dodge adopted by a fellow who wanted to keep a study to himself for a time. No doubt it was thus that Wrayson had secured himself against intrusion.

For Wrayson was inside. Baggy could see him at the table. He had a bottle with some dark liquid in it, and a pair of gloves, very much stained, and something else that Baggy could make nothing of at first, though when Wrayson lifted it to his face he saw that it was a camel-hair brush.

What could the fellow be doing?

The thing in front of him on the table must be a mirror. Quite a small one, but doubtless better than the one over the mantelshelf, which was cracked both down and across, and always dusty.

Baggy's right eye seemed as if glued to the keyhole. He breathed hard as he watched, and there surged up in him a vague idea of vengeance.

For whatever Wrayson might be about it was plainly secret. And Baggy's natural instinct was to suspect something underhand where a secret was concerned.

Very carefully and delicately Wrayson applied the brush to his eyebrows. Then he laid down the brush, and put on the stained gloves.

Baggy breathed harder than ever—so hard that it was really a wonder the fellow inside did not hear him.

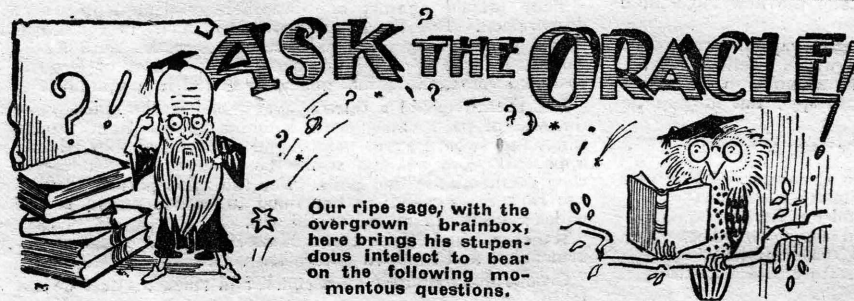
This was something more like a secret, though even yet Baggy was completely puzzled.

The new fellow poured a little of the dark liquid from the bottle into the palm of one of the gloves, and proceeded to apply it to his hair.

"Wonder whether he thinks he's going bald, and is using hair-restorer?" muttered Baggy to himself.

Serve him right if he did go bald! Baggy thought it would be rather a lark to get hold of that bottle and sling it away.

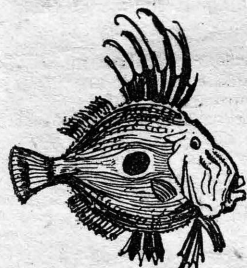
(Continued on next page.)



Our ripe sage, with the overgrown brainbox, here brings his stupendous intellect to bear on the following momentous questions.

Q. Who was John Dory?

A. The only well-known John Dory, so far as I am aware, "Student," is the fish of that name. John Dory—a corruption of an old Gascon name, *jan dorée*—is an ugly-looking brute, olive-brown and yellow in colour, and prominently marked with a black spot surrounded by a white ring on its side. It has a huge protruding mouth and an upper fin that, when the fish is swimming, looks rather like a big plume waving in the water. Its principal food is sprats, and it swims all lop-sided.



I don't suppose you've ever caught a fish like this one. He's called John Dory.

The fish is quite common, and widely distributed in the South Atlantic, Mediterranean and Australian and Japanese waters.

Q. What is a butterbump?

A. This, George Cattermole, is really a bitter, which is a kind of bird. Unfortunately, this explanation of the word will not enlighten you as to why the squire referred to you as one. Alas, George, sometimes the word is used to denote a mutt, hick or hayseed, as our American cousins might say—in other words, bumpkin, yokel, hobnail, clodhopper, loon, slubberdegullion, lout, or looby. Is this clear, George?—if not, write again.

Q. How do Brazil nuts grow?

A. These grow from flowers like apples and on trees which are often more than a hundred feet in height. From the flower a shell forms, and within this shell are about fourteen nuts, each nut again in its own shell. The large outer shell is as hard as granite, and when ripe falls from the tree like a cannon ball. No native will go under the Brazil nut tree when the wind blows, lest a packet of nuts gives him a playful crack on the Coko!

Q. Where are Pompey, Guz, and Chats?

A. These are the bluejacket's name for the great naval bases of Portsmouth, Devonport, and Chatham. Portsmouth is on the Hampshire coast near the Solent; Devonport, near Plymouth, in Devonshire; and Chatham, in Kent, near the mouth of the River Thames.

Q. Has there ever been a straight banana?

A. It is quite true what you say, Percy Hopkins, that a certain firm of song publishers offered a big money prize for anyone who could produce a straight banana. A grower in the West Indies actually sent one in for the competition, and although, of course, it was rounded at the ends, it was otherwise as straight as a poker. Whether he got the prize or not I cannot say.

Q. What is a howdah?

A. This is a seat for two or more used on an elephant's back. Usually it is supplied with a canopy to keep off the fierce rays of the Indian sun. The type of howdah used by some rajahs is a very ornate affair of bright red and gold, and filled with luxurious silken cushions.



Arrayed in all his glory—a rajah enjoying his morning "exercise" in a howdah on board his pet elephant.

Q. Where do Manx cats come from?

A. The Isle of Man. The peculiarity of the species, C. M. G., is that it has no tail, and therefore the fellow who boasted he had tied a tin can to the rudder of one of them, was either mistaken in the species of feline or else "pulling your leg."

Q. What is vox populi?

A. This question was contained in a letter from Cuthbert Green, of Woking. Cuthbert has been suffering at the hands of his school teacher, and merely, he complains, because he translated vox populi as smelling salts. Sympathetic though I am by nature, Cuthbert, I do not wonder that you had to write to me standing at the mantel-piece. Vox populi is not one of those things that you can buy at the chemist's. It is a Latin phrase, and translated means, the voice of the people.

Q. What are Jemimas?

A. I daresay, Reggie Daw, your old auntie could have told you the answer to this. They are old-fashioned elastic-sided boots.



These used to be popular with the ladies—but they aren't now. Old-fashioned boots called Jemimas!

Q. What is Ambergis?

A. The literal meaning of this word is grey amber. It is a fatty substance of an ash-grey colour with yellow or reddish marks in it like those you may see in certain kinds of marble. Really it is not amber at all, but some of the undigested food of the sperm whale. Occasionally it may be found floating in the sea or cast up upon the shore in lumps from half an ounce to over fifty pounds. It is highly valued in commerce, being used in the manufacture of scent. It is worth from £2 an ounce to £6 an ounce, according to supply and demand. Therefore, a sperm whale containing fifty pounds of ambergis may well be worth £2,000 or £5,000 apart from its wealth of oil, whalebone, and so forth.

Not much use, though; there would be more where that came from. And a mean beast like Wrayson, who would not spend his tin in standing a fellow a decent feed would have plenty of cash to buy hair-restorer if he needed it.

Wrayson had nearly finished when Baggy felt his shoulders seized.

The fat Fourth-Former gave a gasp of dismay and almost exclaimed aloud.

He checked himself just in time, realising that the hand was that of Percy Mellish.

"What's the game, Baggy?" whispered Mellish.

"Have a squint for yourself," said Baggy.

He moved aside, and now Mellish's eye was applied to the keyhole.

Mellish was just in time to see Wrayson give the last rub to his head, and then put away the bottle, gloves, and brush in the desk which he always kept locked.

He hesitated before putting away the hand mirror. He looked at his face in it with keen scrutiny, then lifted his handkerchief to his left cheek, took it away, and gazed at it intently.

At that moment Mellish remembered the stained handkerchief that had made Wrayson's upper lip and chin look so queer after Manners' punch had made the new boy's nose bleed, and his eyes gleamed.

Baggy, who knew that one of the Wraysons was much fairer than the other, had a clue which Mellish lacked. But clues were not of much use to a mind so obtuse as Baggy's. He was cunning enough to spy; but he had no power of deduction.

Mellish did not wait for Wrayson to put the mirror away and lock the desk.

"Come along, Baggy!" he said, in a whisper. "You and I are on to something, unless I'm badly mistaken!"

Baggy followed him downstairs and out into the quad. It was tea-time now, and the quad was deserted.

"That chap was dyeing his hair!" said Mellish.

"I thought perhaps it was hair-restorer he was using," Baggy said.

"Hair restorer your grandmother! He was dyeing it, I tell you. Now what's he want to do that for?"

"Don't know, blessed if I do," answered Baggy, puzzled. "Anyway, he didn't mean us to see, and we've seen, so that's a score to me and you."

"You said something the first day he was here about a brother of his, didn't you, Baggy?"

"Yes. He didn't seem to like it much, did he?"

"And for a jolly good reason! I don't know that a chap would be keen on that sort of talk, anyway, but in Wrayson's case—"

Mellish paused significantly.

"Well, what?" asked Baggy, still failing to understand.

"What's the other brother like?" demanded Mellish abruptly.

"A good deal like this one. You might take them for twins, though they're not."

"Is he, by any chance, fairer than this one?"

"Why, yes, of course he is! That's the way you could always tell one from the other."

A glimmering of the truth was dawning even in Baggy's mind now. It became almost a certainty when Mellish said:

"And the other brother's a most awful rotter, isn't he?"

"My hat, yes! They've tried to keep it dark, but he's been as good as sacked from I don't know how many schools!"

"Where is he now?"

"Blessed if I know! I say, Mellish, you don't mean to tell me that this Wrayson's spoofing everybody that he's his brother?"

"I can't tell you that for certain. We don't really know which of them was booked for St. Jim's, do we? But this dyeing stunt looks jolly queer to me."

"This is supposed to be Arnold—I know that. And the wrong 'un's name is Claude."

"Then, though our dear study-mate's supposed to be Arnold, he's really Claude," said Mellish, a crafty light in his eyes. "Baggy, old top, I can see a bit of profit coming to us out of this game."

CHAPTER 5.

Birds of a Feather.

"IT'S a dull life," said Racke yawning.

"You never said a truer word, Aubrey," replied Croke, yawning in sympathetic boredom.

Racke took out his gold cigarette-case, opened it, changed his mind, and put it away again. The prefects had been more than usually down on smoking lately. A fellow never knew when one of them might come sniffing along the corridor.

"Wrayson hasn't looked in yet," Croke said.

"No. Wish he'd come! But perhaps a general invitation

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wasn't the best way to fetch him. I've half a mind to go along an' ask him to tea."

"That won't fill up the afternoon," said Croke.

"Oh, I'd suggest that he might turn up early. He's not at cricket, I know."

It was a half-holiday, and most of the Shell and Fourth were on the playing-fields.

But it was not a compulsory day. Hence slackers like Racke and Croke, Mellish and Trimble, Scrope and Wrayson, had not been compelled to change into flannels, and go, with scowling faces, to make some sort of show of taking part in a game they loathed.

The windows of the study which Aubrey Racke and George Gerald Croke shared were tightly closed; but neither of its two occupants seemed to mind the stuffy atmosphere. It was a far more luxurious apartment than most studies at St. Jim's, for Racke, the son of a millionaire, and Croke had money to burn.

Having so much, one might have thought they would have found no special charm in enticing from the pockets of fellows far less well-off than themselves money for which they had usually no need.

But both Racke and Croke had the gambling fever.

They played against one another at times, in sheer desperation. But there was little enjoyment in those cut-throat games—they knew each other too well. With Racke watching for any sign of trickery on the part of Croke, and vice versa, the games generally ended in a squabble.

But the advent of a third player made Racke and Croke the best of pals. They could combine against him. Sometimes they would agree beforehand that one of them should apparently lose heavily, while the other won. Afterwards they would divide the spoils. For the third player, save in the rare cases when he happened to be too clever or too wide awake for them, never did win.

Racke yawned again, threw himself into one of the roomy armchairs, and fumbled once more with his cigarette-case.

Croke flung himself on a couch and stuck his feet on the table.

"Oh, by gad!" he said, looking out of the window. "It's beginning to rain. Dashed good thing! Those silly asses at cricket will get wet through."

Tap, tap!

"Come in!" yelled Racke.

The cad of the Shell did not care if it was Mr. Railton, or Kildare, captain of St. Jim's, who tapped. Both he and Croke were obviously slacking as fellows of their age should not have done. But there was no law against slacking.

Mr. Railton might lift his eyebrows or Kildare make a few remarks. The point was that neither could do anything, and that was all the two black sheep cared about.

But when they saw who their caller was Croke's feet came down, and Racke stood up on his.

Wrayson had arrived in the very nick of time to save them from feeling that the afternoon must be utterly wasted.

"Glad to see you, old sport!" said Racke heartily.

"Same here!" Croke said.

The new fellow looked at them rather suspiciously. Their welcome was almost too warm. It struck him that they wanted to get something out of him.

"Thought I'd come in," he said. "Sure I'm not in the way?"

"Oh, rot!" answered Racke. "You said you were keen on a little flutter, an' Croke an' I are always ready for that."

"Rather!" chimed in Croke.

Wrayson glanced round. The study fairly reeked of wealth. Wrayson had not imagined anything at St. Jim's quite like it. But it suited him.

Fellows who could spend money on furniture and fittings like these must be well off. Besides, Mellish had told him how rich Racke's people were. To Wrayson it seemed that the fact of Racke and Croke being so full of cash was a safeguard against any attempt on their part to get hold of what little he had himself.

But Cardew knew Racke and Croke better, and that was why at that moment there came another tap on the door.

"Dash!" ejaculated Racke.

"Hang!" exclaimed Croke.

Neither of them said "Come in!"

But, having done all that he thought necessary by tapping, Cardew opened the door and walked in.

"Hallo, Wrayson!" he said. "I looked in at Study No. 2 to find you, an' Mellish told me you'd come along here."

He nodded to Racke and Croke as he spoke.

Cardew was no stranger to that luxurious study. He was as apt to grow bored as were Racke and Croke, and he had more than once sought to relieve his boredom in their company.

They had done their best to rook the slacker of the

Fourth, but they had met with little success. He was wide to all their tricks.

"Wrayson's goin' to have a little game!" said Racke, with a leer. "Care to join in, Cardew?"

He expected a refusal. Both he and Croke fancied that Cardew had come along to fetch Wrayson out.

Both in the Fourth and the Shell there was a good deal of talk about the seemingly incomprehensible alliance between that outsider, Wrayson, and Cardew. No one could understand it, since no one had any clue to the reason of it.

"Don't mind if I do," replied Cardew, with a glance out of the window and a shrug of the shoulders, as though to signify that on such an afternoon there was nothing else worth doing.

Racke and Croke interchanged glances.

With Cardew there, they could not hope to deal with Wrayson as they had intended to deal with him.

But they were resigned. They preferred a game in which there was a chance of cheating. But a straight game was better than none at all.

Besides, if Wrayson won a few shillings, or even if he only lost a few, he would be encouraged to come again, and Cardew could not be always on his heels.

"What shall we play?" asked Croke.

"Solo," suggested Cardew.

"Penny points?" queried Racke. "That suit you, Wrayson? I know you don't mind, Cardew."

"Suits me all right," said Wrayson.

The four drew chairs to the table, and Racke, having locked the door, produced a couple of packs of cards.

No more than the Fourth were the Shell supposed to have keys to the locks of their study doors. But Racke and Croke had one.

Silver and coppers were laid on the table. Racke's gold cigarette-case was handed round, and four Egyptian cigarettes were soon in full blast. The cards were shuffled, and they cut for deal.

Racke and Croke knew that they must go warily with Cardew. So they concentrated attention on the kind of game Wrayson played, with a view to the future.

Cardew, on his side, taking it for granted that Wrayson would not play anything but a straight game, looked out for any little tricks that might be attempted by the other two.

That Wrayson knew the game as well as any of the rest was soon evident. There was nothing rash in his calling, and he played his cards with a proper sense of their respective values.

One thing struck all three in connection with his play. While Racke, Croke, and Cardew all kept their money on the table, Wrayson only left there a sum about equal to his original stake. He had produced a sixpence and half a dozen pennies. He won two or three times before he lost, and each time he tucked away his winnings. When it came to paying out, he fumbled for the necessary coins.

It was almost as though he were saying that the original shilling was the limit he cared to risk.

Cardew did not like it. There was a hint of meanness about it, as there had been a hint—and more—of cruelty in Wrayson's dealings with Baggy in the tuckshop.

Racke and Croke did not mind, except for the notion it gave them that Wrayson might not be an easy pigeon to pluck. But before now the black sheep of the Shell had seen a would-be careful fellow carried off his feet by the excitement of the game.

Except that Cardew continued to lose, and had to bring out shillings pretty frequently, there was not very much in it—which, perhaps, was lucky, for Cardew was the only one of the four who did not mind losing as long as the game was on the square. And, though Cardew looked out for it sharply, knowing the fellows with whom to deal, there was no sign of anything fishy.

Since Wrayson stayed to tea, Cardew also stayed, though he would have preferred to go.

But he felt that there would be no need to worry when Wrayson looked in at Study No. 7 again. A fellow who was as careful with his cash, and who played so capable a game as Wrayson, would not be an easy victim for the Shell sharpers, Cardew thought.

But he could not put out of his mind

the memory of Wrayson's stowing away pence as they were won, as though every penny mattered to him, and he could not bear that his money on the table should show how he was faring.

That was not the way Ralph Reckness Cardew played. "Where did you get to?" asked Clive, when Cardew showed his face in Study No. 9.

"Wrayson an' I looked in on our dear pals, Racke-an' Croke, an' had a little friendly game," answered Cardew coolly.

"Ugh!" ejaculated Levison.

"I beg your pardon, Ernest?"

"I didn't speak. I only grunted," Levison said.

"Ah! Yes, thank you, I enjoyed myself—moderately. No, I did not win. All three of the others won somethin', I believe. Any more questions, dear boy?"

"Well, I like that! I haven't asked you a single blessed question, have I, Clive?" returned Levison, with some heat.

Clive grinned, understanding that Cardew had been answering the questions that Levison had felt inclined to ask.

But Clive did not like this turn of affairs any more than Levison.

Cardew's chums always scented trouble when Cardew took up again with Racke and Croke. The fact that Wrayson now made a fourth did not cause them to feel easier about it.

Levison and Clive grew a trifle easier during the next few days, however. Cardew was not much in Wrayson's company, and he had not been to Racke and Croke's study again, as far as they knew.

In fact, Cardew had but little liking for Wrayson's company. Only the thought of the debt he owed to Wrayson took him into it at all. Wrayson was not in the least the sort of fellow who suited him.

But Wrayson was seeing a good deal of Racke and Croke. He was not often in his study. Baggy was itching to reap some of the advantage that Mellish had been sure would be theirs through their knowledge of the new fellow's secret.

But Mellish refused to do anything in a hurry. "You just wait," he said. "We shan't lose anything by that."

"That's all very well," grumbled Baggy. "But suppose those two rotters win all his cash?"

"He can get more," said Mellish confidently. "Besides, he's winning, so far."

The fat Fourth-Former stared. Baggy never could make out how Mellish knew some of the things he knew.

"How do you know?" he asked. "Don't you worry! Take it from me that I'm right." Baggy had seen Wrayson counting money at times when
(Continued on next page.)

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the other two seemed unobservant, and had made nothing of it. But Mellish had noticed that this counting was always done after Wrayson had been visiting Racke and Croke, and that the money always came from the same pocket.

Moreover, Wrayson's face had shown Mellish that the counting gave him pleasure. And that, of course, meant that Wrayson had been winning.

Mellish's deductions were correct. Not once had Wrayson parted company with Racke and Croke a loser. And the two black sheep were getting very badly fed-up. They had not encouraged this new fellow to make their study a kind of second home in order to have him walking off with their cash.

Thus it was that Cardew, on his way to see Tom Merry in Study No. 10 in the Shell passage, heard the noise of tramping feet, hard-drawn breaths, and lurid language from Study No. 7.

He did not tap at the door this time. He pushed it open without ceremony.

What he saw as he entered made him think better of Wrayson than he had been able to do for some days past.

For the new fellow, hotly attacked by Racke and Croke, was holding his own against the pair.

"Here, stop that!" rapped out Cardew. "Fair play, you cads!"

Racke and Croke paid no heed; they piled in. Blood was running down Racke's face, and Croke had a promising black eye. Wrayson seemed to have been handing out punishment. But he could hardly expect to get the better of the two of them, though it was plain that he knew more about boxing than either.

Had Wrayson been down, Cardew would have taken a hand at once on his side. As things were, he waited, half-hoping that Wrayson might thrash the two. He had closed the door behind him, and stood with his back against it, watching.

Racke staggered from a blow that had only just missed the point of his chin. Croke took one near the mark, and Cardew saw his face pale.

Then Wrayson was on the carpet, with the two on top of him.

Cardew had not seen just how it happened; but Racke had thrust out a foot, and Wrayson had stumbled, and Croke had leaped upon him and brought him down.

They wasted no time. Having got him where they wanted him, they proceeded to take revenge for the blows he had dealt them.

But they only got in a punch or two each.

Then Cardew took a hand. He yanked them off Wrayson and hurled them apart.

"That's enough!" he snapped. "Let the fellow get on his feet again, an' he'll have a chance, even against the two of you. But you're not going to pile in on him while he's down."

All three sat up. Wrayson showed no more haste to get on his feet than the other two. He had had his fill of fighting. When the hot fit was upon him he could hold his own with most fellows of his size and weight. But it seldom lasted long. It had passed now.

Racke's right hand came from his face with blood on it. Croke fingered tenderly the outskirts of a blackening eye. Wrayson had both hands behind his back for a moment. Then he slipped one of them into his trousers pocket.

"Better call it off," said Cardew. "If you start again, I shall take a hand!"

"We caught him cheatin'!" snarled Croke.

"An' he plugged me in the face with a knuckleduster or somethin'!" added Racke. "May have been a ring with a sharp stone in it. Anyway, you can see what it's done!"

Wrayson held out his hands. Both were guiltless of anything in the shape of ring or knuckleduster. He had got rid of the incriminating evidence, unless he was searched. And he felt sure that Cardew would not allow that to be done.

"Must have been my thumbnail," he said. "It was an accident. But I'm not going to say I'm sorry. See here, Cardew, these two rotters accused me of cheating—"

"You were cheatin'!" howled Racke, still wiping blood from his face.

"We both saw you!" yelled Croke.

"Oh, rats!" said Cardew. "Who's goin' to believe that yarn? You two are known cheats. I've caught you both out before now. It's much more likely that you were tryin' to swindle Wrayson, an' that he kicked—small blame to him!"

"That's just how it was, Cardew," said Wrayson quickly. "Then why did you say we accused you of it, if you really caught us at it?" Racke snarled.

Wrayson did not answer. Cardew paid no heed to it at the time, but he remembered it later. Now he was only anxious to get Wrayson away.

Wrayson, for his part, was willing enough to go. Thanks to Cardew's timely appearance, he was going with all the honours of war.

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"I should keep out of there in future, if I were you," said Cardew, when they were in the passage.

Wrayson, fumbling with a ring in his trousers' pocket, nodded, and nothing more was said between them.

Wrayson felt no gratitude to Cardew. Gratitude was not in him.

And Cardew, on his side, though for a moment, when he had seen Wrayson standing up to the two Shell fellows he had thought better of him, found doubts creeping into his mind when he reviewed the affair.

CHAPTER 6.

The Brothers!

AT the Grammar School, meanwhile, Arnold Wrayson was getting on quite well. He was the right sort of fellow to get on well among other decent fellows.

From the first he had seen no cause for regretting the change of schools, as far as he was concerned.

St. Jim's might be an older foundation than the Rylcombe



Wrayson's hand was on the desk when he heard the sound of approach, and he did not move. But the door

(See Ch

Grammar School. It was known by repute to thousands who had never heard of its near neighbour. It was much bigger.

But Arnold did not see how it could be much better.

The Grammar School had fine playing fields and a spacious gym. It lacked nothing that a school should have.

If only Claude had fallen upon his feet at St. Jim's as his brother had at the Grammar School, it might be that the change would turn out for the best, after all.

But Arnold could not help worrying about Claude. The fact that he heard nothing did not comfort him. No news is not always good news.

As it chanced, the younger Wrayson had not as yet met any of the St. Jim's fellows.

He had heard Gordon Gay and the rest speak of some of them—of Tom Merry and Talbot and Blake, of D'Arcy and Piggins and Kerr. But Cardew's name had never been mentioned in his hearing.

Then one morning, between classes and dinner, when he happened to be in a grocer's shop at Rylcombe with Harry Wootton and Mont Blong, a St. Jim's fellow peddled past, and into Arnold Wrayson's mind flashed the same scene, though from a different viewpoint, that had come to Cardew's memory earlier, when he met Claude.

Wootton was giving orders at the counter; but the French junior, like Wrayson, had been looking out into the street.

"Who was that St. Jim's chap?" asked Arnold.

"Didn't see anyone," replied Wootton indifferently. He went on with his order: "Two pounds of Osborne biscuits and a pound of chocolate biscuits. Six tins of the best salmon and six tins of sardines."

Wootton was spending on behalf of a syndicate, so to speak, not on his own account.

"Zat was Cardew, mon ami," said Mont Blong.

Arnold had been sure of it, and he saw in a flash what it meant.

Claude and Cardew must have met.

But at St. Jim's Claude Wrayson was Arnold Wrayson. And that meant that Cardew must have recognised Claude as the fellow who had saved his life.

Arnold hated the thought of that. It was not that he cared so very much about being robbed of credit. He had never swanked about that rescue; and when his parents had heard about it they had had no notion what peril he had incurred.

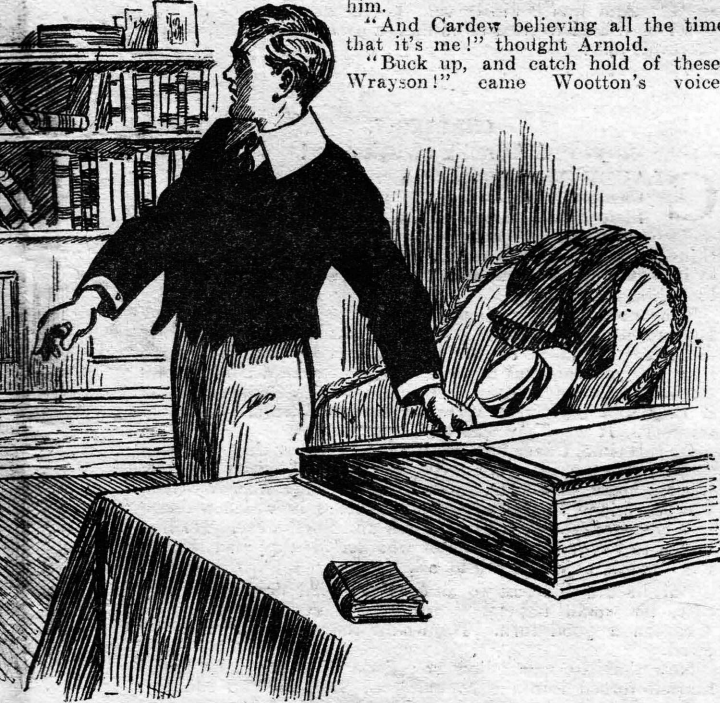
But somehow he had always thought warmly of Cardew, who had been so full of courage even when his teeth were chattering and his clothes freezing on him.

He had wanted to meet Cardew again. He hated the thought of Claude's meeting Cardew in his place.

He knew that his brother would do what he would never have thought of doing—play on Cardew's natural gratitude, and get all he could out of him.

"And Cardew believing all the time that it's me!" thought Arnold.

"Buck up, and catch hold of these, Wrayson!" came Wootton's voice.



Approaching footsteps in the passage. He told himself that these footsteps were swung open. "What are you doing here?" demanded Harry Noble. Chapter 8.)

"You look as if you were day-dreaming. Come on, man, lend a hand!"

The Australian junior thrust into Arnold's arms a big brown paper parcel full of tins of salmon and the like. He handed another to Mont Blong, and followed them out clapping a third.

"Hope we don't meet a crowd of St. Jim's bounders," he remarked.

"They surely wouldn't touch us when we were loaded like this?" said Arnold.

"Oh, wouldn't they? That's all you know!"

"An' zat is not vair' mooch," said Mont Blong.

"I don't quite understand about this feud," said Arnold, with a puzzled frown.

"Oh, you will, when it breaks out again. And that will be pretty soon, I reckon," replied Wootton, with a grin.

"But—there isn't any real rotten feeling, is there?"

"No, ass! Of course, there are some rotters at St. Jim's

we bar. But we don't have much to do with them. It's our pals we scrap with!"

"Oh!"

It was not quite easy to understand. But Arnold gathered that before long he would be given a chance to solve the seeming mystery.

He was debating with himself now whether he should tell Wootton and Mont Blong that he had a brother at St. Jim's.

As yet he had said nothing about it to anyone. At the outset he had felt too nervous about the change of identities; and later, when some of the nervousness had worn off, it had seemed a bit late to be mentioning it casually.

Now he wished he had spoken at first. But he could not make up his mind to say anything until he had seen Claude.

He wrote a brief note, and posted it that evening, suggesting a place of meeting in Rylcombe Lane. Arnold was there before his time. Claude came ten minutes or so late.

A drizzling rain was falling, and Claude's raincoat collar was pulled up to his ears. He had what Arnold had come to think of as his bad weather face. Claude Wrayson hated wet about as much as a cat hates it, and always seemed to have a vague notion that a day like this was a personal affront to him.

"What did you want to drag me out into this for?" was his greeting.

"I couldn't very well tell yesterday that it was going to rain to-day, could I?" returned Arnold, quite reasonably.

"Well, what do you want, anyhow?"

"I wanted to know how you're getting on at St. Jim's."

"I'm not in danger of getting sacked yet, if that's what you mean," sneered Claude.

"Well, I should hope not! Hang it all, Claude, I've given you another chance, when goodness knows you've had plenty before, and done blessed little with them!"

"I don't see where it comes in," said Claude sulkily. "I'm not sure now that I shouldn't have been better off at the Grammar School."

"You didn't go to St. Jim's to please me, did you? And it's a fine place; our fellows say that, though, of course, we're up against St. Jim's in a way."

"I don't know what your fellows are like. The St. Jim's crowd are a pretty measly lot. There's only one of the whole gang I've much use for."

"Who's that? Tom Merry?"

"What do you know about Tom Merry? No, it's not Tom Merry. He's simply the limit for swank!"

"D'Arcy, then?"

"That silly ass! Why, almost the first thing I did there was to black his eye for him!"

Arnold's heart sank. He knew his brother too well to accept that statement as literal fact. But it was plain to him that Claude's awkward temper was making trouble for him at St. Jim's, as it had done elsewhere.

"Who is it, then? One of the fellows in your study?"

"No fear! Trimble's a fat rotter, and Mellish—well, I can stand him better than Trimble, but I should say he's a complete rotter."

"You don't mean Cardew, do you?"

"Suppose I do? What about it?"

"Does he think that—that you're me?"

"I'm Arnold Wrayson at St. Jim's—to Cardew, the same as everybody else. It wasn't likely I should give away the fact that we'd changed over, was it?"

"Then he thinks you saved his life?" said Arnold, a bitter note in his voice.

"If you call it that. There wasn't so much in it that I've ever been able to see. You got hold of the ladder and went to help him out. I'd have done as much if I'd had the chance."

Arnold knew better. Claude had not made the slightest move to help. But it was not worth while to argue about that episode of years ago. It was the present that mattered.

"You're chummy with him, then?"

"Oh, rather!"

"And what about his pals? Can't you get on with them?"

"Levison and Clive? No dashed fear! I bar them, and they bar me. Why, it's got so that Cardew's had to shake them off pretty much, because they won't be chummy with me."

Arnold's spirits sank lower still.

There stood his brother, bragging of having caused a split between chums. Arnold knew nothing of Levison and Clive; but he knew his brother. If those two were worth anything at all they must be worth far more than Claude Wrayson. For Claude Wrayson had never been a true friend to anyone.

And at the bottom of all this was the fact that Arnold had saved Cardew's life, and that Claude was taking the credit.

In imagination Arnold put himself in Cardew's place. The two were very unlike. In Arnold Wrayson there was none of the inexplicable waywardness that worried Cardew's chums in Cardew.

But they were alike in this one thing; at least—that such a debt would mean more to either than Claude, selfish to the core, could ever understand.

"Don't you worry, Arnold!" said Claude. "Why, only yesterday he rushed in when I was having a giddy row with Racke and Crooke, and took my part at once. I'd held the bounders off pretty well up to then; but I'm not going to say that I could have beaten them both single-handed. They drew off when Cardew came to the rescue, though."

"What was the row about?" Arnold asked.

"They said I'd cheated—the sweeps! We were playing nap—"

"Oh, hang it all, Claude, you promised the pater that if you had another chance you'd stop that rotten gambling!"

"A little game of ha'penny nap isn't really gambling! Besides—"

"Did you cheat?" rapped out Arnold.

The question was hardly necessary. Claude never played any game fairly unless closely watched, and Arnold knew it.

"Of course I didn't! I was too good for them without that. They're cheats, both of them. Cardew told them so, straight out; and they couldn't deny it."

"Cardew doesn't play with them, does he?"

"You bet he does!" said Claude, with a grin. "Old Cardew likes a game of solo and a fag as well as anyone. And Racke and Crooke—well, I'm not saying that I shan't make it up with them. They'll come round. They can't find many chaps to play with—"

"Jolly good thing, too!"

"And they think I've pots of money. I haven't let on to anyone how beastly stingy the pater is!"

"He told you why. And you promised him—"

"Rats! If I'd given my promise after I knew what pocket-money he was letting me have it might have been worth something, but—"

"It wouldn't! Your promises never are, Claude!"

Claude Wrayson clenched his hands and his eyes gleamed viciously.

"Don't you talk to me like that!" he snapped.

"I shall say what I think fit. And you needn't fancy you can scare me, Claude. I could lick you with one hand tied behind my back!"

"Old Arnold bragging! That's new!"

"We've never come to that, and we never shall if I can help it," said Arnold quietly. "But I've got to put things straight to you. It makes no end of difference Cardew being at St. Jim's. He'll put down to me all the rotten things you do—"

"Thank you for nothing!"

"I can't remember that you ever have thanked me for anything. But never mind that. I've always stood by you, even when I knew you were all in the wrong, and that was almost all the time. But this is your last chance! If you can't make good at St. Jim's you're done for! You know what the pater and mater said. Now I say the same. You can't see that when you behave like a rotter it damages me. I've stood it so far. But I can't stand being blackened to Cardew!"

"Who's blackening you? I've done nothing worse than Cardew's done himself. He's gambled with Racke and Crooke—often. He smokes."

"Does he cheat?"

"No, and I don't, either!"

"You seem pleased that you've come between him and his pals, but that seems to me a mean thing to do. You sneer at Merry and D'Arcy. Our fellows think a heap of them. You're going all wrong, and you're dragging Cardew with you!"

"Much you know about Cardew if you think he can be dragged where he doesn't choose to go! Besides, what's he to you? It isn't as though he'd saved your life. I could understand then. But you don't owe him anything."

"No. But he may think he owes me something, and he may be trying to repay you, believing you to be me. I hate it, Claude! I shouldn't ask or expect anything of him myself, and it's rotten that you should be trading on it."

"I don't admit that I am doing anything of the sort," snapped Claude. "But what do you want me to do?"

"What you'll never do in this world—go straight!"

And with that, Arnold swung round and strode away. It was no good saying more, and he did not want to let his feelings get the better of him.

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He felt for the moment that everything was spoiled for him. The happy days at the Grammar School were ended. From now on, he would be waiting to hear that the same kind of thing that had happened elsewhere had happened at St. Jim's—that the authorities simply would not put up with Claude any longer.

Perhaps it would not be quite so bad for him if they had both been at St. Jim's. But the fellows at the Grammar School would wonder at his having kept them in the dark. And there was Cardew. Who could tell how far he might get involved in Claude's misdoings?

"Arnold!"

Claude's voice broke in upon his troubled thoughts, and it held a note that Arnold had heard only once or twice before.

He turned, to find his brother coming towards him through the drizzle. Claude's face had changed. There was no sneer on it now. They looked like brothers then; that sneer always went far to destroy the likeness between them.

Claude put out his hand.

"I'll do my best—honest Injun, I will!" he said. "Only I do get so fed up with cricket and all that rot. And I won't let Cardew down—I promise you I won't."

Arnold gripped his hand, but did not speak. If he had answered then, he would have made an ass of himself, he knew. More than anything else in the world did he want to be able to believe in Claude, and he was anxious that Cardew should not suffer through the imposture to which he had agreed.

He turned away again with a feeling of thankfulness in his heart.

It was not long, however, before doubts began to creep into his mind.

Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? And was it likely that his brother, whom he had never been able to trust or to hold a promise binding, would keep this one?

CHAPTER 7.

A Skirmish at Rylcombe!

CLAUDE WRAYSON had little chance of letting Cardew down during the next few days, for he saw little of the slacker of the Fourth.

He did not go to Study No. 9. He was not exactly thin-skinned, but Levison and Clive had made it very clear to him that he was not wanted there, and Cardew did not look him up.

The more Cardew thought over the scene in Aubrey Racke's study, the less he liked it. Racke's face certainly did show the mark of something that could not well have been a thumbnail, but might easily have been a sharp-edged stone set in a ring. And, though Racke and Crooke cheated if they had a chance, Wrayson had not accused them of trickery. It was they who had accused him.

By this time, Cardew had recognised the fact that Wrayson could never be his pal in the sense that Levison was, or Clive. More than that, he could never feel that Wrayson was his friend in the more limited sense in which a dozen or a score of fellows in the Fourth and Shell were. He had begun to have a shrewd doubt whether his supposed rescuer was capable of friendship at all.

But he did his best to choke down that doubt. In any case, he would not let it influence him if he could do Wrayson a good turn. He would remember the debt he owed.

Now that the new fellow saw little of Cardew, he found himself forced into the company of Trimble and Mellish.

Something in the attitude of his two study-mates towards him, puzzled Wrayson. They appeared friendly enough, especially on those occasions when he treated them to a really good spread.

But they seemed to share a secret which concerned him in some way.

It was Baggy, not Mellish, who gave away that fact, with his sly nudges in Mellish's ribs, and his winks.

Mellish was biding his time, holding his fat accomplice back. It was not always easy to hold Baggy back. But the spread helped him to be patient, and a dread of Wrayson's temper kept him from trying blackmail on his own. He must have Mellish's support, and Mellish was not ready yet.

"Let's go along to Rylcombe," suggested Mellish one morning after classes.

"What's the good? Of all the mouldy little holes I ever saw, Rylcombe's the mouldiest," said Wrayson.

"Nothing seems to be good enough for you. Buck up, old top, and come along!"

"That's the style," said Baggy, rubbing his hands. "There's a shop in the village where you can get good cakes,

I've had some from there already. Quite good-sized ones, too, and only twopence each! A dozen or so of them make a decent snack before dinner."

"Had a remittance this morning, by any chance, Baggy?" inquired Wrayson.

"Nunno." Baggy gave Mellish a meaning glance as he answered, but Mellish shook his head. He was not going to have his plans upset by Baggy's lust for cakes.

"Oh, I'll come!" said Wrayson. Ahead of them, as they turned one of the many bends in Rylcombe Lane, they saw five fellows. Tom Merry and Lowther were there, but not Manners, who had stayed behind to do some photographic work. Blake and Herries and Digby were the other three.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was engaged in writing out lines in the Form-room just then, the result of a difference of opinion with Mr. Lathom in class.

Tom Merry & Co. soon left the three following them far behind. Baggy was slow at the best, but the fat Fourth-Former was not much slower than Mellish and Wrayson.

Except for a stray dog, a farm-cart lumbering slowly along, and an old woman on the pavement, the High Street seemed quite empty when they reached the village.

"There you are!" said Wrayson. "It would be saying too much for the blessed place to call it dead-and-alive. It's as dead as a doornail, and never will be alive again!"

"Never mind," said Baggy soothingly. "Here's the shop where they sell the cakes. You're going to stand treat, aren't you, Wrayson, old chap?"

Before the refusal that was on Wrayson's lips could be spoken, something happened.

Out of the shop where they sold the cakes came Herries, carrying a big bag.

At the same moment the door of the shop adjoining opened, and a fellow much of the same burly type as Herries appeared, wearing a cap of the Grammar School colours, whom Baggy and Mellish recognised as Carboy.

Possibly there was some old cause of quarrel between Carboy and Herries, or perhaps Carboy simply acted on general principles. There were times when St. Jim's fellows and Grammarians met when they seemed absolutely impelled to come to blows.

"St. Jim's bounder!" howled Carboy. "Come on, Grammarians!"

And he made a grab at Herries' cap.

"You waster!" roared Herries. "Why, I—I'll—!" Handcapped by his burden, Herries dodged, and staggered the Grammarian with a hefty shoulder charge. But Carboy came on again, and Herries, forgetful of what he was carrying in the heat of the moment, swung the bag round.

Squelch! The bag burst, and Carboy's face almost disappeared beneath its smashed contents. Cake crumbs were in his eyes, his ears, his nose, his mouth. He did not mind it in his mouth; but it was worse than inconvenient elsewhere.

"Yoooop!" he spluttered. "Gug-gug-gug!" Baggy darted forward. A cake or two had reached the pavement almost undamaged, and the opportunity was too good for the Fat Fourth-Former to lose.

But he never got his hands upon the plunder, for Tom Merry bowled him over in his rush, and Baggy lay on his back, gasping as if for a wager.

Gordon Gay and Frank Monk were the next on the scene. Blake and Digby appeared from the cycle shop. The Wootton brothers, and half a dozen more Grammarians, rushed up. Lowther fought his way through them to Tom Merry's side.

"What's it all about?" asked Wrayson, bewildered. Then he saw two brothers among the Grammarians. His immediate desire was to clear out at once.

He had realised that, sooner or later the presence of another Wrayson at Rylcombe must become known at St. Jim's. But he had not counted on the fact becoming known first to fellows all of whom he regarded as foes, or in such a way as this.

He was amazed at Arnold. Here was Arnold piling in with the rest, as though he looked upon the St. Jim's juniors as deadly enemies. Arnold, in spite of the fact that he was a real fighting man when roused, had always been a pacific sort of fellow, never seeking a quarrel.

Mellish was just as keen as Wrayson on clearing out, though for other reasons.

Gordon Gay and his followers, and Tom Merry and his, might look upon this sort of thing as a pastime. Percy Mellish preferred a pastime in which there was smaller chance of getting hurt.

"Come on, Wrayson!" said Mellish, catching Claude by the sleeve.

"Wait for me!" howled Baggy, still down, with the fray raging round and over him. "Let me get up, you rotters!"

Carboy, blinking painfully after rubbing from his eyes the last crumbs of Herries' cakes, stirred Baggy with his foot. "Who's stopping you?" he snapped. "Get out of it, porker! You're no use to your side!"

Baggy scrambled up, dodging the trampling feet as best he could, and withdrew, grunting and gasping, to a spot beyond the danger zone.

Lowther turned a grinning face which already showed a bruise or two.

"St. Jim's to the rescue!" he roared. "Back up, Mellish! Come on, Wrayson! This is up to you!"

At Lowther's shout of "Come on, Wrayson!" Gordon Gay and Frank Monk and Jack Wootton had all turned in surprise.

Wrayson was one of their men. Why should Lowther yell to him?

Then they saw Arnold close behind them, locked in deadly strife with Blake. Ten yards away, standing by Mellish on the pavement, was a fellow who looked to them his very double!

There was no time then to ask questions. The Saints were outnumbered two to one; but they were putting up a good fight.

Lowther, though he had called to Mellish, had not hoped for any help from him, or imagined that any help of his would be worth having.

Mellish and Trimble were recognised non-combatants. They had slunk away from the fray so often that they could incur no further damage by slinking away once more.

But Wrayson was on trial. If he had responded to the call, Tom Merry and the rest would have thought a lot better of him than they now did.

The new fellow guessed that. He knew that he ought to rally to the colours of his school.

It was not funk that held him back. It was not the presence of his brother among the enemy. It was not his dislike for the fellows by whose side he must fight if he waded in.

At least, it was not any one of these things alone. Yet perhaps they all came into his reluctance to play a manly part.

For if he did not actually funk, he hated getting hurt. And Arnold and he never had struck one another, though that fact was more to Arnold's credit than to his. And in cold blood he would not have stirred a finger to help Tom Merry or Lowther, Herries, Digby, or Blake.

His blood was not cold now. The fray had stirred him, selfish as he was. For a moment he was on the verge of striking in. His hands clenched; his eyes gleamed; he took a step or two forward.

But Mellish's hand tugged at his sleeve. "Come on, Wrayson! Why should we let ourselves be dragged into a rough-and-tumble like that?"

"I'm off, anyway!" snorted Trimble.

And he led the retreat shamelessly. Mellish and Wrayson followed. There may have been a little shame in Mellish. But he consoled himself with the thought that the fellows he was leaving behind outnumbered had all called him a funk many a time. What could they expect of him after that?

Shame was strong in Claude Wrayson. But it did not last long. By the time the three had reached the end of the High Street and turned to see how the fight was going on, he had told himself that he was well out of it all.

"Oh crumbs, look there!" gasped Baggy.

Carboy, thirsting for revenge, had singled out Herries, and now the two were struggling furiously in front of the village grocer's.

Suddenly Carboy slipped, struggled vainly to recover his



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balance, and went floundering on his back into a crate of eggs that stood in front of the grocer's.

Carboy's howl of dismay, and Herries' yell of triumph, came to the ears of the three watchers.

They saw Gordon Gay dive, catch Lowther round the legs, and fling him beside Carboy.

The grocer rushed out in his apron, shouting wrathfully. All down the street now the tradesmen and their assistants were popping out, and from nowhere, as it seemed, a crowd of small boys had gathered.

"Rylcombe's woke up," said Wrayson, with a grin that had nothing cheerful in it.

Blake and Arnold had parted company now. In the changes of the fray Tom Merry had found himself engaged with Mont Blong, and the new fellow who must surely be Wrayson's twin brother.

The new fellow soon showed that he was no duffer with his fists, and Tom Merry had his hands full with the two Grammarians. Suddenly Mont Blong's foot shot out, nearly catching the captain of the Shell off his guard. It was la savate—the foot punch, so to speak, that is regarded as being all in the game by the French, but has never found favour in England.

But Tom Merry knew Gustave from of old. Quick as was the French boy, he was quicker.

Mont Blanc's leg was seized in a grasp like a vice. Mont Blanc staggered, catching with one hand at Arnold Wrayson, with the other at something on his left.

That something was a big roll of linoleum, standing at the door of the Rylcombe furniture stores.

Crash!

The next moment Mont Blanc was down, with the linoleum on top of him. Arnold Wrayson could not keep his feet, though he tried to drag himself free from the French junior, and together the Grammarians and the linoleum sprawled on the pavement.

"Yoop!" howled Mont Blanc. "I am keel!"

Wrayson was up in time to avoid the clutch of the furious shopkeeper, but the French boy was not so fortunate. A big hand had him by the collar, and another big hand smote his bullet head.

Tom Merry had turned at once. He saw Lowther struggling out of the egg-crate, Digby down on the pavement, and Blake and Herries, back to back, putting up the best defence they could against four or five of the enemy.

Lowther was smeared with egg from head to knees. Egg yolk and white and shell clung to his face, his jacket, his waistcoat. Carboy had done most of the smashing, but Lowther had got as much as Carboy of the result.

The grocer had Carboy by the ear.

"Oh crickey, let go, you silly ass!" roared Carboy. "Do you suppose I sat in your beastly eggs for fun?"

"Keep off, you rotter!" shouted Gordon Gay, dodging as Monty Lowther made an attempt to clasp him in a fond embrace.

"Grab him, Monty!" yelled Tom Merry, intercepting the leader of the Grammarians.

But as Lowther's arms were extended to grip Gordon Gay, someone, regardless of consequences, grabbed Lowther round the middle and pulled him back.

"Oh, good man, Wrayson!" cried Gay, with a gasp of relief.

"We'll have to run for it!" roared Tom Merry.

There was nothing for it but a retreat—in good order, if possible—but a retreat, anyway. Outnumbered two to one, the five Saints had no chance.

Tom Merry found Lowther close by his side—too close for his liking.

"Here, keep your distance, Monty!" he warned his chum. Digby scrambled up and joined them.

A moment later Blake and Herries were by his side.

"Bolt for it!" he said.

"And I'll fight a rearguard action!" cried Lowther, precipitating himself at Jack Wootton, who promptly backed away.

Tom Merry, Blake, Herries, and Digby moved away slowly. The rearguard action was for the moment effective. Few of the Grammarians cared to get too close to the egg Lowther.

But Carboy, having freed himself from the grocer's grasp, came with a rush, feeling his right ear as he came, to make sure that he had not lost it. And with Carboy came Wrayson. Carboy was as eggy as Lowther, and his comrade was in but little better condition.

"Go it!" yelled the Grammarians.

Lowther turned and dashed after his retreating chums. As soon as he had reached them all five ran.

A derisive yell of triumph followed them.

"Whacked to the wide!" shouted Gordon Gay. "Who's top dog now?"

"Two to one!" yelled back Tom Merry. "Wait till we can get you on something like even terms!"

There was no pursuit, and the five Saints slowed down.

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Glancing round, Tom Merry saw Gordon Gay patting Arnold Wrayson on the back. The new boy was eggy owing to his having come in contact with Lowther.

"That fellow Wrayson must be brother to our rotter," said Tom Merry breathlessly. "No one seems to have heard about his having a brother at the Grammar School, but I don't think there can be any doubt."

"It's his brother all right," returned Blake, "and so far as I can see we've got the wrong Wrayson!"

The leader of Study No. 6 did not guess how much more there was in what he had said than he meant by it.

CHAPTER 8.

Fresh Trouble for Wrayson!

"THERE you are, Mellish!" said Baggy Trimble. "I told you so."

"Rats! You never had a giddy notion as to the meaning of it all till I put you up to it," answered Mellish. "But it does make a bit of difference, of course. We know now that the other brother's at the Grammar School. Looks to me as if they'd changed places on the way here, else why should this chap dye his hair?"

"That's it," said Baggy, looking as wise as Nature would let him. "Arnold's become Claude, and Claude's become Arnold. I don't know why, but that's how it must be. We've got him, Mellish! Time to make him cough up!"

Mellish, rubbing his chin, considered that. "Ye-es," he said doubtfully. "If we're ever going to do it this seems the right time, for he knows now that we know his brother's there. But he's a savage bounder when he's put out. I'm not keen on the job. Look here, let's toss to settle who shall speak to him."

"No fear!" snorted Trimble. "It was agreed all along that you should, you know, Mellish. If I'd been going to I'd have done it sooner than this. I've only been waiting for you. Besides, you can put things so much better than I can, old fellow."

Greed and fear fought a battle in the mind of Percy Mellish, and it was greed that won.

Mellish was hard up, as usual, and he could not bear to let slip such a chance as this. After all, Wrayson's ferocity must surely be tamed by the knowledge that his study-mates could make matters very unpleasant for him.

"Right-ho!" said Mellish. "But you've got to be here, Baggy, and if he goes off the deep-end just you yell out your loudest. That'll fetch some of the fellows in, and when they turn up I guess he'll give way. You can tell some giddy lie or other about why you sang out, you know."

Footsteps sounded in the passage.

"He's coming!" gasped Baggy, shaking like a jelly.

The handle of the study door turned. Mellish was pale but resolute as Wrayson entered.

There was nothing about Wrayson just then to suggest that anyone need be afraid of him. He looked badly under the weather. He had made up his quarrel with Racke and Crooke, had been playing with them again, and, not daring to try on anything thus soon, had lost pretty heavily. Heavily for the state of his finances, that is. In the days when he had more pocket-money that quid or so would not have troubled him as it did now.

He had been thinking as he came along the Shell passage that he would really have to borrow from Arnold. It might not be easy, but it could be done, he felt sure. Arnold had not been cut off with such a paltry pittance as his.

At another time he might have noticed that neither Mellish nor Baggy looked quite as usual. But his mind was full of his own troubles, and he hardly glanced at them.

"We've something to say to you, Wrayson," said Mellish, his voice shaking a little.

Wrayson stared.

He looked from one to the other, noted Mellish's pallor and Baggy's nervousness, and scented trouble. He even guessed what form the trouble would take, for his mind ran on much the same lines as the minds of those two, and he himself would not have been above blackmail.

"Say on," he growled. "But you'd better be careful!" "Oh, don't come any of that!" said Mellish, plucking up courage. "You know well enough, Wrayson, that we can put you in a nasty corner. What did you dye your hair for—Claude?"

Wrayson made a step forward with gleaming eyes, his hands clenched.

Mellish dropped back.

Next moment, however, the gleam had gone from Wrayson's eyes, and his hands dropped. In less than a dozen words Mellish had shown that he knew his secret, and against one who knew, who did not merely suspect, the pretender felt himself helpless.

They knew that his hair was dyed. They knew that he was Claude Wrayson, not Arnold. They had seen Arnold among the Grammar School fellows. And they knew—Mellish through Baggy—his black record.



"Yow!" George Alfred Grundy gave a howl as Wilkins trod on his toe, and hopped wildly on one foot. The next moment he lost his balance and stumbled heavily against Mr. Linton's chair. Crash! "Oh!" The Shell sat petrified as all the legs of the chair snapped at once and Mr. Linton went flying. (See Chapter 9.)

"What do you mean?" he asked weakly.

"If we're going to keep your secret it's got to be made worth our while," replied Mellish, growing bolder.

"You blackmailing rotter!" hissed Wrayson.

"Nothing of the sort," said Trimble, also feeling that they had feared Wrayson needlessly. "It's only that you've got something you want kept dark, and we're willing to keep it dark, if you make it worth our while—see?"

"What are you going to do if I refuse?" Wrayson asked.

"Split!" answered Mellish.

"That's it!" Baggy said, smirking. "It would be our duty to tell the Head all we know. You've got too much sense to refuse, old fellow. Shell out, and let's go on being pals."

"How much?"

"Quid each now. Bit more later on, you know," Mellish suggested.

"I can't do it. You can have five bob each now, and another ten bob each to-morrow—after I've got hold of some. That's the most I can do now."

"You'd better think again," said Mellish.

But Trimble held out a grubby hand. The fat Fourth-Former never could resist the temptation of money on the nail.

"Oh, well!" said Mellish, seeing that Wrayson was playing into their hands by what he offered, "five bob to-day—ten to-morrow—and we'll talk about the rest later on."

Baggy chuckled as he took two half-crowns. But Mellish looked at the silver discontentedly. He did not in the least believe that this was the utmost Wrayson could do. But it seemed worth while to lie low.

The little bit of amateur blackmailing made singularly little difference to the relations of the three in Study No. 2 that evening. Baggy, having just had time to run across to the tuckshop before prep, busied himself with the contents

of various paper bags, growing greasy and jammy and crumby in the process. Mellish got on with his work as usual, with his five shillings safely tucked away. Wrayson was very much his ordinary self.

He had written a line to Arnold, asking him to be at the spot where they had met before at half-past twelve next day. He felt sure he could get a couple of quid or so out of his brother, and there would be no need to repay it. He had often borrowed from Arnold before, but had never paid back.

He returned from the rendezvous next morning in the worst possible temper.

Arnold had stayed away because he had to. News of the skirmish in the village had reached Dr. Monk, the Head of the Grammar School, and he had punished all concerned by detention.

The St. Jim's juniors had had better luck. The eggy Lowther had managed to get in without attracting the observation of anyone more important than Taggles; and half-a-crown had kept him quiet.

Wrayson contrived to steer clear of Mellish and Trimble till after dinner. But then he found himself cornered in the study.

They were insistent on his carrying out his promise. If he handed over now the ten shillings each they demanded he would have only a small sum left for the game with Racke and Crooke to which he was looking forward.

"The cash I reckoned on didn't turn up this morning," he said. "It's pretty sure to come by the afternoon post, though. You can wait till then, can't you?"

"S'pose we shall have to!" growled Mellish.

"But don't you get playing any of your games with us, Wrayson," said Baggy threateningly, lifting a podgy forefinger in warning. "We're on to you, you know, old sport!"

Wrayson was not fond of Mellish. But before the cad of the Fourth had blackmailed him he had not greatly objected to him. Baggy, however, he had loathed from the first; and that feeling was ten times stronger now.

It was a half-holiday. That meant that most of the studies would be empty in the afternoon for a couple of hours or so.

When Wrayson arrived at St. Jim's he had made up his mind to cut out one of the nasty little habits that had made trouble for him elsewhere.

But that was not because he had repented of stealing. It was merely a matter of prudence.

A fellow might be caught gambling and get off with ordinary punishment. But a fellow caught pilfering was more than likely to get the sack.

The thing was, he told himself now, to make certain of not getting caught.

So, when the sound of many voices and the click of leather on willow came from the direction of the playing-fields, Wrayson moved stealthily along the Fourth and Shell passages, ears on the alert, seeking his chance.

He had thought of trying Study No. 9. Levison, he had heard, never had much money; but Clive was better off, and Cardew had more money than he knew what to do with.

But the door of Study No. 9 was closed, and he dare not open it.

There was a door ajar in the Shell passage. Let's see, now—whose study was this?

He knew who inhabited most of the studies by this time, though there were few into which he had been invited.

Ah, he remembered! The Australian chap, Noble, and the Canadian, Dane, and Glyn, who messed about with inventions.

This looked promising. He had barely spoken to any of the three; but he had heard that Glyn's people had any amount of money, and he thought the two juniors from overseas were hardly likely to be poverty-stricken.

He stole in, pushing the door to after him. His hands were on an unlocked desk when he heard a curious sound in the passage—footsteps unlike ordinary footsteps; for they were accompanied by a slight flapping noise.

Kangaroo had hardly started to play before the sole of his right boot had parted company with the upper. He had noticed nothing wrong with the boot before. But he did not waste time in wondering how it had happened. He hurried back to the School House to change into another pair.

The flapping noise came nearer. Wrayson did not move, and his heart quickened its beat. He told himself that the footsteps would be sure to pass the study.

But the door swung open!

"What the thump are you doing here?" demanded Harry Noble.

"I—I thought this was Skimpole's study," Wrayson said lamely.

"Well, it's not! Why, you rotter, I don't believe you thought anything of the sort! I believe— Oh, get out of this, you sweep!"

Kangaroo was a typical Australian; and the Australian is seldom in much doubt as to what he thinks of anyone. Kangaroo had set down Wrayson as a complete rotter.

Wrayson moved towards the door. There was something in his hangdog manner that confirmed Kangaroo's worst suspicions.

"Here, stop a moment!" he snapped. "I think I'd better go through your clothes, to make sure that you're not taking away anything that doesn't belong to you!"

"You won't, hang you!" snarled Wrayson defiantly.

He dodged Noble's outstretched hand, and made a jump for the doorway. Noble kicked—unluckily with his right foot.

"Yooop!" he howled; for the flapping sole had betrayed him, and he felt as though at least two or three of his toes were broken.

Then, handicapped as he was by the damaged boot, he rushed after the Fourth-Former.

Wrayson darted round the corner well ahead, and collided heavily with a middle-aged gentleman of rather severe aspect.

The middle-aged gentleman went down, gasping. He was on his back before Wrayson recognised Mr. Linton, Form master of the Shell.

Kangaroo discreetly retired.

Wrayson would have bolted, hoping that Mr. Linton did not know him. But he was arrested by that gentleman's angry shout.

"Boy! The least you can do, having knocked me down, is to assist me to rise, I think!"

Unwillingly, sulkily, Wrayson helped him up. Perhaps it was clumsiness that caused him to wrench the master's arm in doing that. Perhaps it was bad temper.

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If it was not accidental, it was a big mistake. Mr. Linton, annoyed by the collision, might have pardoned that, since it was obviously not intentional. But Wrayson's sulky face as he wrenched at the extended arm angered him greatly.

"What do you mean by it, boy?" he asked sharply.

"I don't see how I could help it. I didn't know you were coming round the corner. How should I?" returned Wrayson ungraciously.

"You could not know it, though that is not sufficient excuse. But I refer less to that than to the exceedingly rough manner in which you complied with my request for assistance."

There was a nasty gleam in Wrayson's eyes as he answered:

"You asked me to help you, didn't you?"

"I did. But I did not ask for such help as could only add more to the pain you have already inflicted upon me!"

Mr. Linton had seen that nasty gleam. But, in spite of it, he would have let the matter drop had the junior made decent apology.

But Wrayson, as though taking it for granted the incident was at an end, moved away. He was not keen on being asked why he had been in so great a hurry.

"Come back, boy!" snapped the master.

Wrayson faced round.

"Who are you? I do not know your name. Of the Fourth, no doubt?"

"Yes. Wrayson's my name."

"Speak to me with proper respect, Wrayson!"

"I didn't know I'd been disrespectful!"

But there was disrespect in every accent of his voice, in the look on his sulky face. It was not merely his omission to say "sir" that had annoyed Mr. Linton, but his whole bearing.

"Then I must teach you! Come with me!"

Wrayson dared not refuse to follow. But when, Mr. Linton's study reached, he saw the master of the Shell fetch a cane from the cupboard, he put both his hands behind his back.

He had learned that it was a very rare thing for the masters of the Shell and Fourth to interfere in any way with each other's Form, and he presumed on that knowledge.

"You're not my Form master, sir!" he said impudently.

Mr. Linton set his lips.

"That is true, Wrayson. But in spite of the fact that I am not your Form master, I am going to cane you. Hold out your hand!"

Wrayson kept his hands behind his back. He was in one of his worst moods, sullen, rebellious, reckless.

Mr. Linton, the cane still in his hand, went to the door.

Kangaroo was just passing, having changed his boots.

"Noble," said Mr. Linton, "will you oblige me by ascertaining whether Mr. Lathom is in his study? If he is there, please tell him that I should be obliged if he will have the goodness to come here—on a matter of some importance."

"Certainly, sir!" replied Kangaroo cheerily.

He had caught a glimpse of Wrayson, his hands behind his back, his face like a thundercloud; and he had grinned as he went on his errand, guessing its purport.

Within two minutes Mr. Lathom was with them, and Harry Noble was on his way back to the game he had left.

"This boy has treated me with gross disrespect, Mr. Lathom," said the Shell master. "He denies my right to punish him. I have asked you to come here, not, of course, that I have any intention of putting up with his impudence, but in order that you may see him caned, and thereafter take such measures as you may deem fit to make him understand the situation."

"I am obliged to you for doing as you have done, Mr. Linton," answered the Fourth Form master gravely.

He looked at Wrayson. Hitherto Wrayson had considered Mr. Lathom rather a mild, easy-tempered little man. He saw another side of him now. Mr. Lathom looked every whit as stern as his colleague.

Wrayson held out his hand. Reckless as he felt, he could see that there was nothing to be gained by further obstinacy.

Swish, swish, swish!

Three hard strokes he took, wincing at each.

Then Mr. Lathom said quietly:

"You will come with me, Wrayson! Mr. Linton, it will be no fault of mine if this boy does not appreciate in future the fact that he cannot be impudent to a master of another Form with impunity."

"Thank you, Mr. Lathom!"

The two masters were good enough friends, though always there was some slight formality in their intercourse.

"Oh, dash it all! I'm going to be caned again!" mumbled Wrayson, as he followed Mr. Lathom.

But he was not caned again. He had to submit to a brief lecture, and was given five hundred lines.

Stripped to his vest, Claude Wrayson was forced to run six times up and down the double row of Shell fellows. The cad of the Fourth stumbled blindly along under a rain of stinging blows from slippers and knotted towels. (See Chapter 10.)



He went away sore with Mr. Lathom, and full of rancour against Mr. Linton. It hurt his vanity that the master of the Shell should have scored over him so effectively.

CHAPTER 9.

Wrayson Seeks Revenge!

THERE was talk at St. Jim's about the unexpected discovery that Wrayson had a brother at the Grammar School; but it was confined to a few, and Cardew did not hear it.

More were aware of Wrayson's clash with Mr. Linton, and a good many of the juniors would have liked to hear just what happened to him between the two masters. Kangaroo was told that he need not have been in such a hurry to get back to cricket. They could have done without him for a bit longer there, and his haste had left incomplete a story that interested them.

Wrayson's unpopularity was naturally not lessened by his slinking away from the fray in the village, or by his impudence to Mr. Linton. The Shell respected its Form master, if it did not exactly love him.

Brooding over what he considered his wrongs, Wrayson hit upon a plan to revenge himself upon Mr. Linton.

He had to wait his chance to put his plan into execution. The chance came after classes on Tuesday.

A travelling menagerie had come to Rylcombe for one day only, and as it was moving on that evening the time between morning school and dinner afforded the only chance of visiting it. Hence there was an exodus from the gates as soon as classes were dismissed.

Wrayson stood at the window of Study No. 2 and watched the juniors making their way to the gates.

Racke and Crooke were not of the crowd. Mellish was there. Wrayson did not see Trimble, but took it for granted that he had gone.

When the last stragglers had reached the gates Wrayson took from his desk something which he wrapped in a newspaper and hid under his jacket, and made his way to the Shell Form room.

Arrived there, he spread the newspaper on the floor, and set to work to use the thing it had contained—a small, strong saw, well greased, and with teeth that bit speedily into wood.

He was taking a risk, and he knew it. But, with nearly all the Shell out of gates, the risk was small.

No one came in, and within ten minutes he had finished.

Each leg of Mr. Linton's chair was sawn all but through. The master might take his seat as usual, and possibly keep it to the end of the afternoon's work without mishap. But, sooner or later something was bound to happen that would send him crashing to the floor. A sudden jerk in sitting down or getting up might do the trick. Certainly anyone's stumbling against the stool must do it.

"Make the old sweep look a fool!" Wrayson muttered to himself, as he made sure that no particle of sawdust had fallen beyond the newspaper.

He folded that up carefully, put the saw into the last fold, and stole out with the parcel concealed beneath his jacket.

In the passage he met Trimble. Baggy was, in fact, looking for him.

"Hallo, Wrayson!" he said. "You haven't gone to the menagerie, then? But, of course, you're going. I don't mind if I come along with you, old fellow."

"Thanks, but I'm not going. I don't care for menageries," replied Wrayson.

"Well, I'm not so keen on them myself," Baggy said. "I'd rather go to the tuckshop, you know."

"No reason why you shouldn't go there if you want to!"

"There is, though," said Baggy dismally. "I haven't a giddy sou, and Mrs. Taggles won't give me tick. I say, Wrayson, what have you got under your jacket?"

"No business of yours," answered Wrayson off-handedly.

"It's something I've just fetched from my desk. I'll take it up to the study, and then we might go across and have a snack, though I warn you I can't afford much."

This seemed to him the safest way to stall Baggy off. "Righto!" said Trimble, with alacrity.

But he stole upstairs after Wrayson, and saw him open his small desk in the study and put something inside, then put a match to a folded newspaper which he placed in the empty grate.

Baggy dodged round the corner as Wrayson came out. As Wrayson went downstairs, expecting to find him below, he dashed into the study, snatched the newspaper, quickly smothered the few flames which had obtained a hold, thrust it into the bottom of the cupboard, tried Wrayson's desk, found it locked, and rushed off to make his way down by another staircase.

He was blowing hard when he met Wrayson, who had not hurried, in the hall below.

But Wrayson, who did not yet know of that other staircase—which Baggy had no right to use—attached no importance to his want of breath, never dreaming that it was due to a rush downstairs.

They went across the quad together, Wrayson with a slouching gait and frowning brow, Baggy looking happy.

Wrayson had little money to spare. He would have come away from the tuckshop without any at all, had Baggy been given his head. But Baggy was not.

"Mean beast!" grunted Baggy, as they parted company outside.

Wrayson went towards the gates. Baggy hurried up to the study.

The contents of the folded newspaper puzzled him utterly. There was nothing in it but sawdust. He could not imagine what it meant. But he stowed the paper carefully away again.

Mr. Linton's chair supported him through the two hours of classes that afternoon without giving him the least cause to suspect anything wrong with it. The master of the Shell was not a jerky kind of person. His movements were as a rule careful and deliberate.

But on Wednesday morning Wrayson's scheming had its result, though through no hasty movement of Mr. Linton's.

George Alfred Grundy was the unconscious ally of Wrayson, a fellow of whom Grundy disapproved as thoroughly as anyone in the Shell or the Fourth.

Grundy, finding himself horribly bored by the history of Queen Mary, had enticed his chum, Wilkins, into playing the intellectual game of noughts and crosses.

"Grundy! Wilkins!" snapped the master. "Come out before the class and bring the paper you have between you!"

Grundy and Wilkins rose and made their reluctant way to the Form master's desk.

On reaching there Wilkins unfortunately trod on Grundy's toe.

"Yow!" roared Grundy.

He hopped wildly on one foot, and clutched the other. Grundy was always a clumsy fellow. Now he lost his balance, grabbed at Wilkins, missed him, and stumbled heavily against Mr. Linton's chair.

In any case the impact of so solid a body as that of the great Grundy might well have sent chair and master crashing. But it could hardly have been anticipated that the crash should have happened in just the manner it did.

For all the legs of the chair snapped at once, and Mr. Linton went flying.

Crash!

"Oh!" he gasped, as he shot over, while the Shell sat petrified with amazement.

Next moment a dozen fellows came rushing to his aid, alarmed lest he might have sustained some serious injury, for he had come down with a mighty thwack.

"Are you hurt, sir?" asked Talbot.

"Yes—no—it's nothing," gasped the master of the Shell, when he had regained some of his breath. "But who has been tampering with that chair?"

"I assure you, sir, I haven't!" exclaimed Grundy in haste.

"But somebody has! The legs have been sawn almost through! Go back to your places!" rapped out Mr. Linton.

Grundy scrambled up and got back to his place. Wilkins followed him without delay. They were sorry if Mr. Linton was hurt, but glad at the prospect of escaping the sniggering of the Form if they were found guilty of playing the childish game of noughts and crosses.

"Who is responsible for this outrage?" asked Mr. Linton, when all were in their seats.

No one answered. There was no one present who had the slightest idea who the culprit could be.

"I am waiting!" snapped the master.

Silence!
"I will give the guilty boy one more chance. If he

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confesses he will certainly be punished. But I will not take the extreme view of his guilt. I prefer to believe that no member of my Form would plan grievous bodily injury to me, and that this was at worst a foolish, practical joke."

That was generous. But still no one spoke up.

Mr. Linton put his hand to his head. Then he glanced at the clock. Its hands pointed to a quarter to five. "I am going to dismiss you now," he said. "I do not feel equal to continuing the class just now. But this afternoon the whole Form will attend here at two o'clock, and will remain until five!"

And the day was Wednesday, a half-holiday!
But there was no half-holiday for the Shell! Instead, an hour more of classes than on an ordinary afternoon!

CHAPTER 10.

Getting It in the Neck!

"OH, get out! I've had about as much of you as I can stand, you fat sweep!"

Claude Wrayson gave Trimble a deadly look as he spoke.

Baggy had put in a request for a trifle on account. It might suit Mellish very well to wait till Wrayson could fork out ten bob or so. Baggy preferred even a sixpence to nothing.

"Look here, Wrayson—"

"Dry up! I've no time to waste on you! You can wait!"

And Wrayson hurried off to join Racke and Crooke.

He had an appointment with those sportive young gentlemen, but he did not find them in. They were keeping another appointment—with Mr. Linton, in the Shell Form room.

It was no accident that the news of what had happened in the Shell Form room had not as yet become public property. The dismissal of the Shell had been followed by a meeting of the Form from which no one was allowed to absent himself. The loss of an afternoon's cricket was no light matter, and Tom Merry and his supporters were resolute to find out who the culprit was. Like Mr. Linton, they imagined that a Shell fellow must have been responsible.

No one was directly accused. But some four or five knew themselves under suspicion, and there was plenty of argument. It went on till the first bell rang for dinner. After dinner there was little time to spare before the Form went into the class-room again.

In the course of dinner, however, some inkling of the trouble spread, and by the time Wrayson reached Study No. 7 in the Shell passage the Fourth knew, though the fellow most concerned was among the half still in ignorance.

He tapped at the door.

There was no answer, and he pushed it open.

Racke and Crooke were not there. Wrayson glanced round. Here was a chance!

But as his hand stretched out towards the drawer in the table from which Racke or Crooke was wont to produce the packs of cards, he heard footsteps.

Next moment Cardew spoke from just inside the door.

"No game for us this afternoon, Wrayson!" said the slacker of the Fourth. "Some sweep has played a nasty trick on old Linton, and the whole Shell is puttin' in the afternoon at Cicero or algebra!"

It struck Cardew that Wrayson's face showed signs of some uneasiness. He did not connect it with the news about Mr. Linton; but it did strike him as curious that Wrayson should be where he was, on the other side of the table from the door, in the absence of the study's occupants. Whispers were going about the two Forms that Wrayson had some queer little ways, and Cardew, hating to hear them, could not help hearing.

"That so? Well, then, we may as well get out of this," said Wrayson.

He and Cardew parted at the door. Wrayson was in an ugly temper.

Just his luck! He had counted on the game that afternoon to provide him with something to stall off Baggy and Mellish, and his own revenge had spoiled all chance of a game!

Trimble tackled him again in Study No. 2.

"Oh, really, Wrayson, you don't seem to understand that Mellish and I are treating you a lot better than you deserve!" he said. "Mellish may do as he likes about waiting. I'm not going to wait any longer."

"Shut up, hang you!"

"Shan't! You can't treat me like this! You—"

"Hold your tongue, do you hear!"

But Baggy came nearer, his fear of Wrayson's temper forgotten in his greed.

Wrayson's eyes blazed, and his fist shot out, landing full on Trimble's waistcoat.

"Grooooh!"

Baggy dropped to the floor, groaning loudly. He had fed not wisely but too well at dinner-time, and that blow had shaken him up in more senses than one.

Wrayson hurried out. He had struck without considering the consequences, and he wished now he had held his hand. It seemed best to him to leave his victim to get over it alone. To stay might cost him five bob.

Still groaning, Baggy rose heavily to his feet.

He dropped into the study armchair. Then, as he set his fat wits to work, his little eyes gleamed vengefully.

He would not wait for Mellish to come in. Mellish was too ready to give Wrayson more rope. Mellish looked forward, while Baggy lived mainly for the present.

The fat Fourth-Former got up. He went to the cupboard and hauled out the newspaper with the sawdust in it. Trimble had not heard of the trouble in the Shell, but that parcel meant something, he knew—something that Wrayson wanted kept secret; something, therefore, that could be used against him, if only a fellow knew how to use it!

He thought of going to Tom Merry. He was well aware that the Terrible Three barred Wrayson. But they also barred Baggy, and Lowther would not give him a chance to explain. The humorist of the Shell always wanted to be funny.

Then he thought of Levison. All the Fourth knew that, while Cardew treated Wrayson as a friend, Clive had no use for him, and Levison would not even speak to him.

Baggy hurried off to Study No. 9.

Levison and Clive were there. The detention of the Shell had spoiled cricket for the afternoon. Cardew was not there, and Baggy was glad of that.

"I say, Levison!"

"Scat!" returned Levison politely.

"Clear out, Trimble!" snapped Clive.

"But, I say, Levison, this is serious, you know, and I've come to you because you're a jolly sharp bouncer, and can put two and two together—see? Now, look here, what do you make of this?"

Trimble placed the newspaper on the table and unfolded it, displaying the little heap of sawdust, now massed together from the slight damp of the cupboard.

Levison's instant keenness surprised him.

"My hat, Baggy! Where did you get that?" asked Levison.

And across the table his eyes met Clive's. Already Levison had told Clive that it was a wonder none of the Shell should have thought of Wrayson in connection with Mr. Linton's fall, seeing that the Shell master had cased him so recently, and that he was such a vengeful bouncer.

"I saw Wrayson set light to it yesterday, and I grabbed it as soon as he was out of the study, and shoved it away in the cupboard," explained Baggy.

"And you've come to me now because you fancy Wrayson was the rotter who sawed Linton's chair-legs through—eh?" Baggy Trimble stared in amazement.

"I didn't know about Linton," replied Baggy, with wide-open eyes. "But Wrayson did—of course he did! And the thing he put away in his desk must have been the saw he did it with!"

"Looks jolly well like it! What do you say, Clive?"

"I'd like to hear a bit more before I make up my mind," said the South African junior.

He was not long in hearing more. Levison soon drew from Baggy the fact that he had met Wrayson in the Form-room passage, with his jacket bulging.

"He said he'd been to his desk. But he was down the passage past our Form-room door," Baggy said.

"You're sure of that?"

"Oh, rather! I didn't think anything about it at the time; but I'm quite sure now."

"Seems to me, Clive, that we've only to get hold of that saw, and we've a clear case against the rotter!" said Levison eagerly. "Perhaps Cardew would chuck him then!"

"I say, you know, going to a fellow's desk—that's rather off!" objected Clive.

But Levison was less scrupulous than his chum.

"Not in a case like this," he said. "Where's Wrayson now, Baggy?"

"I think the rotter went out after he'd knocked me down."

"Coming, Clive?"

Clive shook his head. But Levison went, taking with him a tin-opener.

While Baggy watched outside, gloating, yet fearful, Levison tried what keys he had, and, finding none of them of any use, employed the tin-opener.

A powerful wrench and the lock gave. There lay the saw, proof positive of Wrayson's guilt, and Levison's eyes gleamed.

"Don't say anything to the rotter if he comes back, Baggy," he said. "We must wait till Linton lets those chaps out before he's tackled."

"Right-ho, Levison!"

Baggy cleared off. He realised that it behoved him to keep out of Wrayson's way till Levison had taken action.

Cardew did not come in. Levison preferred that he should stay away for the present. Clive was not sure that he would not like Cardew to know before the Shell did.

Mr. Linton proved merciful. Perhaps a doubt had entered his mind. Anyway, he dismissed his Form at four o'clock instead of detaining it till five.

Baggy dashed off to Study No. 9.

"Shell's out!" he gasped.

Levison hurried off, meeting Tom Merry & Co. just as they were leaving the Form-room.

"Will half a dozen of you fellows come to No. 9 this moment?" he said, with a note of triumph in his voice. "I can prove to you who played that low trick with Linton's chair!"

Those who came numbered many more than half a dozen. No. 9 was crowded within twenty seconds.

"There doesn't seem any doubt about it," said Tom Merry grimly, when Levison had explained.

"There isn't a giddy particle of doubt!" growled Kangaroo.

"What's to be done? It's hardly worth while reporting the cad. Linton's not much the worse, and we don't want to take a hand in getting a fellow sacked," said the captain of the Shell.

"Make him run the gauntlet of the Shell!" suggested Lowther.

"Excuse me, but may I be allowed to enter my own study?" came Cardew's voice from the doorway.

They made way for him. Levison, looking him straight between the eyes, but without any tone of triumph now, told him what had been found out.

Cardew paled. Why it should affect him so much none there could understand, though his two chums felt sorry for him.

"It's really no affair of mine, but what are you fellows goin' to do about it?" inquired Cardew.

"Lowther suggests that he should be made to run the gauntlet of the Shell," answered Tom Merry. "I think it's about the right notion."

"Hear, hear!" chorused a score of voices.

Cardew shrugged his shoulders. He was feeling utterly sick at heart. But he said nothing.

"Fetch him to the Form-room, some of you," said Tom Merry.

The Shell fellows trooped off.

"You've done with that rotter now, surely, Cardew?" said Levison.

"Have I?" said Cardew. "I don't see why you should assume that, Levison!"

Wrayson was escorted to the Form-room by Kangaroo, Grundy, Dane, Manners, and several other members of the Shell. He had been found in his study, and had recognised at once that resistance would be worse than useless. He did not even attempt denial.

At the door gathered a small crowd of the Fourth. Wrayson refused to remove any of his clothes, so he was forcibly stripped down to his vest. Then he had to run six times up and down the double row of Shell fellows, each armed with slipper, knotted towel, or some such weapon.

It was painful, though hardly as painful as a flogging. But worse than the pain was the disgrace. Thick-skinned as he was, Claude Wrayson felt that.

It was soon over. The crowd at the door had melted. The Shell fellows were clearing away. Now the last had gone, and Wrayson, still stripped to the vest, stumbled blindly to a desk, put his head on his arms, and sobbed.

"Here, chuck that, an' buck up! Let me help you on with your clobber," spoke Cardew behind him.

Wrayson looked up, in utter surprise.

"Do you mean to say you're not going to drop me, Cardew?" he asked, his voice shaking.

"Of course I'm not, man! Dash it all, if it hadn't been for you I shouldn't be here!" answered the slacker of the Fourth.

But his heart was heavy in him, for his true feeling for Claude Wrayson was one of utter contempt.

If he could only have known then that the fellow to whom he believed he owed so much was an impostor!

Not yet, however, was that knowledge to come to him. He had a burden to bear, and he shouldered it.

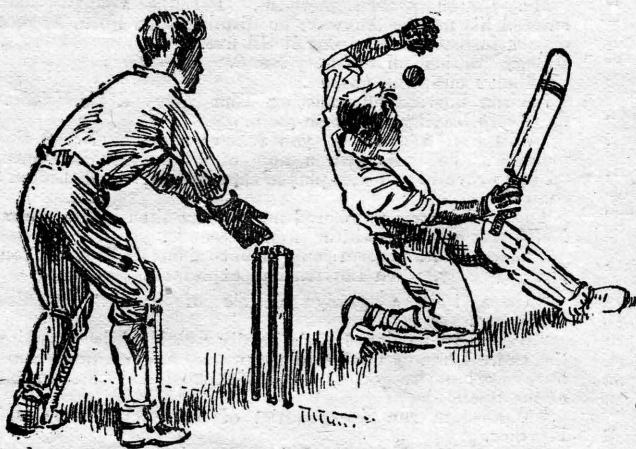
How that burden was lifted from his shoulders another story must tell.

THE END.

(The sequel to this magnificent story: "CARDEW'S BURDEN!" will appear in next week's issue of the GEM. You can only make sure of reading it, chums, by ordering your copy WELL IN ADVANCE!)

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HARD HIT! They reckoned Dick Dare would crumple up when he received a "bad news" telegram while he was at the wicket. But Dick didn't. The news hit him hard, but he hit out harder, and his boundary meant a win for Markshire!



The LUCK of the GAME!

by
RICHARD RANDOLPH

A GRAND NEW CRICKET STORY, DEALING WITH THE ADVENTURES OF A BOY WHO LOVES THE GREAT SUMMER GAME, AND IS A MASTER AT IT, TOO.

The Wire!

THE first ball of the day caused the crowd to yell exultantly. Balkwill bowled it, and Ernest Tyldesley drove it hard and high. Dick was fielding in the country, the only man far out. Running like a deer, he got under the ball right on the boundary, and grabbed it when a six looked a dead cert.

"Oh, well caught, sir!"
Nothing could have been better calculated to restore his lost self-confidence. He forgot Slogger Batts; he forgot the puzzle of Balkwill's behaviour; he could fasten his mind upon the game.

The dismissal of the England player put Markshire once more on terms. There were other good bats to come; but with Watson, Hallows, and Tyldesley out, and the Red Rose team still but a hundred or so ahead, it was anybody's game—except that the home side's lead on the first innings made it incumbent upon Lancashire to go for a win, not a draw.

That made no small difference. Green was content that Makepeace should take his own time; it was good to have anyone so solid and dependable at one end. But his instructions to the others were to get runs as quickly as possible; and they were obeyed.

The Lancashire skipper himself, Peter Eckersley, Iddon, and Sibles all got out in forcing the game. Dick had been given another chance with the ball, and Balkwill was kept on. It would have been hard to find a pair of bowlers against whom the forcing game would have been more risky, for both were using their heads to the best advantage.

But all four of the men mentioned got some runs, and Makepeace stayed. Richard Tyldesley and McDonald both slammed a few before they got out. With Duckworth in, Makepeace reached three figures; with Duckworth out Markshire faced the task of getting 257 to win in well under three hours.

Again Balkwill and Dick had shared the wickets; but this time Dick's analysis was better than the crack's. He had taken five for 107; Balkwill's five had cost 136.

"You two have done your share already," Westland told them. "But I shall have to call on you for more, I fear. Dare, I'm sending you in third wicket down."

"All right, sir," said Dick.
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"You don't mind?"

"Not a bit!"

Somehow strong hope had come to Dick. He had heard nothing more, yet he could not believe that the worst should happen.

Westland and Raynes went for the bowling from the outset. But it is rather dangerous to go for McDonald, fresh and fit. The captain made an excellent 42, and Raynes a rather fluky 37. Both were out with 85 on the board in an hour. On figures it looked all right. But these were two of the men of whom most was hoped; and their departure meant much.

Reeve, the Yarnley amateur, helped the score along by making 25 in a quarter of an hour. Seeing that he was twice missed, it was hardly a good innings; but it was valuable.

Dick joined Balkwill, who had scored 13. Balkwill actually smiled as his young partner passed him.

Such a crisis as this saw the long, lean fellow at his best. He seemed wholly free from nerves. He did not slog; but his boundary hits far outnumbered his singles, and no one could bowl a maiden over to him.

It was good to be in with such a partner. Dick felt that he could take his time to play himself in, though they were fighting the clock, as well as Lancashire. It was not a great deal of time he needed; in ten minutes he was scoring freely, and in half an hour the ball was almost the size of a football to him.

They had put on a hundred runs in an hour, and the game looked absolutely safe. Then the unexpected happened. A ball from Sibles got past Balkwill, and his off stump tottered.

Within twenty minutes Markshire were struggling to avert defeat. Four wickets had gone down with only 10 runs added. Dick was still there. He had given no chance, missed no opportunity of scoring.

But 25 runs were still needed. Armley was Dick's partner, and only Edmead remained after that.

A telegraph boy ran on to the ground between two overs. Dick saw him come without a notion that the wire was for him.

But the wire was. He tore open the buff envelope which was handed to him.

"Batt's dead," it read!



WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE.

Driven to rebellion by the tyranny of an over-bearing manager, young Dick Dare is sacked from his job in an insurance office and decides to apply at the Markshire County Cricket Club ground for a place on the staff. A born cricketer he is engaged by Mr. Ainsley, the man who has

brought Markshire to the forefront of cricketing counties, and whose life Dick had saved a few days before. In his new job at the county ground, the youngster makes two bitter enemies in Leonard Urvine, the Markshire captain, and Herbert Blair. As a result of Urvine's plotting Dick is waylaid by Slogger Batts, an ex-bruiser, and forced into a fight. Batts is knocked out. Owing to a mistake on the part of the hospital authorities Dick is arrested during the progress of Markshire's match with Lancashire on a charge of manslaughter, but is subsequently released. In consequence of Dick's poor display on resuming Lancashire pile up a huge score. Fearing the possibilities of defeat Balkwill, another Markshire player, endeavours to console Dare by deliberately trying to the effect that Batts has taken a decided turn for the better.

(Now read on.)



The Work of an Enemy!

DICK'S head swam, and for a moment he felt sick and faint.

But he pulled himself together with a painful effort.

Suspense was at an end. He might not know the worst, for he could not even guess what view a judge and jury would take of the manner in which the Slogger had come to his death. But he knew that he would have to stand his trial; and he felt sure that Mr. Ainsley would not agree to his playing for the county again, even if he were acquitted.

But he must not let his side down. The youngster glanced at the pavilion clock. There was time enough for the making of those 25 runs, though no time to spare.

He faced McDonald, and hit for four a ball that most men would have been quite satisfied to play without attempting to score from it. Then he made a single. And then McDonald sent Armley's middle stump careering.

"Didn't run you out, anyway, lad," said Armley, as he passed Dick.

Edmead hurried to the wicket. Dick was well aware that if Edmead had known what he knew he would not out-live the first straight ball. But his chum did not know; and Dick had a word with him as he went by.

"If you can keep up your stumps, Alan, I think I may get them," he said.

"I'll try," answered Edmead.

He played three from McDonald with a straight bat that hardly left the ground.

Green glanced round. Sibbles had been on at the pavilion end. Now the Lancashire skipper threw the ball to Dick Tyldesley.

That stout and active cricketer caught it, and threw it up gleefully. He had been longing for another chance.

Dick would have preferred Sibbles again. But he told himself that there was no need to take risks with the slow bowler. Time did not press greatly.

Another consideration pressed, however. Edmead did not pretend to batsmanship. He had a fair defence, but no strokes. Something more than a fair defence is needed if a man is to resist long the expresses of McDonald; and the Australian, a fighter born, was at his best now, in spite of all the hard work he had put in.

A four off the second ball, and a two off the fourth of Tyldesley's over, reduced the runs needed to 14. The last ball was played past cover—an easy two. But when Edmead started for the second run, Dick sent him back.

"Young idiot!" snarled Urwine. "A certain run there!"

"Dare's got a head on him," remarked Balkwill, among his brother pros. "Eh, Walter?"

"Oh, don't talk to me!" the fast bowler snorted. "According to you there's nothing in the head I've got on me!"

"Not much," said the crack. "But it was Dare's I mentioned."

Balkwill was cool and collected. But neither Toplady nor Armley could sit still, and the others were as bad as they.

McDonald's face was grim as he ran up the crease. He understood Dick's manoeuvre, and his will was as strong to win for Lancashire as Dick's to win for Markshire.

Three balls that were like three thunderbolts followed. Three not one half as deadly have done the hat trick against competent batsmen before this.

There was no possibility of a hat trick here. It only needed one ball past the bat and on the wicket.

The first and second were met with the full face of the bat, and the spectators cheered. The third was deftly steered through the slips, all along the ground, and the cheering grew riotous. Only 10 required now!

McDonald may or may not have been the least bit flustered. The best of bowlers, even when strung up to the limit, must send down now and then a ball less good than the rest. The fourth of that over was off the leg stump and short of a length.

Dick got under it, hit it hard over short leg's head, and stood in his crease to watch it pitch among the crowd, while Edmead, running down the pitch, yelled at him to come on. There was no need to run in any case; at the worst it must be a boundary. But it was a 6.

The fifth ball was a snorter. It beat Dick, and all but grazed his off stump.

"P-p-phew-w-w-w!" came from the crowd.

Last ball of the over. Dick had intended to try for a single, in order that he might get Edmead out of harm's way. But, though ever so little, the delivery was on the short side. Dick stepped back, and cut late and hard, with all the suppleness of his wrists in the stroke.

He and Edmead ran. As fast as they ran two fieldsmen chased the ball, but never looked like catching it. While the third run which made Markshire safe from defeat at

worst—was still incomplete, there swelled to the skies a mighty roar.

The ball had reached the boundary, and Markshire had beaten the champions by a wicket!

The crowd swarmed on to the ground. Dick ran for the pavilion. They would have carried him in had they grabbed him, he knew. He might not have minded that much had things been different. But now that the crisis was over he had something bigger to face, and he hated the thought of being lionised with that awful black cloud hanging over him.

In the pavilion Westland was the first to greet him. Dick did not see Urwine. Colin Reeve pressed forward. Mr. Frost's impassive face showed a smile for once. Strangers patted him on the back.

Dick said no word to anyone, and on his face was a look that they could not understand.

"Not so dusty," drawled Balkwill, in the pro's quarters. "You let us down badly yesterday, but you've made up for it to-day."

The congratulations of the rest were pitched on a higher note than that. But it did not take them long to see that something was wrong.

"What's the matter, Dick?" asked Armley.

"That's what I've been wondering," said young Edmead. "He was all right until he'd made the winning hit, and then—"

Dick drew the flimsy sheet from his pocket. It passed from hand to hand, and faces lengthened as the men read it.

Balkwill was the last to see it.

"I don't believe it!" he snapped.

"But why should they wire if—"

"Who's they? My idea is that this is a dashed lie, sent to put you off your play!"

The others stared at the crack. His notion seemed a wild one to them.

"I don't get you, Balkwill," said Dick.

"It's a fake! The work of an enemy! I don't a bit believe that if the Slogger was dead the hospital people would be in such a frantic hurry to let you know. Here, wait! I'll ring them up!"

A telephone was installed in the pro's room. Balkwill went to it.

They waited in silence. They heard his crisp questions. He turned.

"Not a word of truth in it, Dare!" he proclaimed.

"More than that, there's good news for you. Batts has come to himself. They won't have to operate. There's no pressure on the brain—probably no brain to take it. The sawbones brotherhood think now that he's a ten to one on chance of pulling through."

"Hurrah!" cried Toplady.

"Dick! I say, old man!" gasped Edmead, as Dick reeled and would have fallen, but for his chum's outstretched arm.

"A little drop of brandy is my prescription," said Balkwill, with a sardonic grin they knew so well on his lean, dark face.

"Go and take it yourself!" snorted Toplady. "The boy doesn't need it. He's all serene now, aren't you, Dick?"

Dick was, though for the moment the revulsion of feeling had been almost too much for him.

"I think I will," said Balkwill, lounging out of the room.

Warned!

WHEN one came to think of it, there was really no likelihood of anyone at the hospital sending a wire to the County Ground, even if that person had been in haste to let Dick know at once. And there seemed no reason why any such haste should have existed.

In fact, the telegram had been sent from a village two or three miles from Manchester—a suspicious circumstance in itself. But the sender—or the man behind him, for it was likely the sender was but a tool—had counted on Dick's failing to note that fact. The wire would come as a sudden blow, and the chances were—so it might have been argued—that he would have got out before he began to doubt that it told the truth.

The story of the false wire did not reach the ears of Mr. Ainsley or Mr. Frost. Not even Westland was told.

Balkwill's counsel was responsible for this secrecy.

"You'll have a better chance to find out who your enemy is if you keep dark about it, Dare," he said, when he came back.

The rest agreed to say nothing to anyone, though one or two of them thought the matter should be reported.

On the following day, the day of the Glamorgan match, Westland still led Markshire, and Urwine went about the pavilion with a limp.

Ernest Tyldesley drove the first ball hard and high. It soared the way into the country, and Dick Dare, running like a deer, got under it right on the boundary. With a stupendous effort he reached for the dropping ball!
(See page 24.)



Ferguson came back. Colin Reeve kept his place. But Dick was not dropped. Jenyns had to stand down, and took his fate without grumbling. Peter Nevern was still in bed, and Edmead was to keep wicket again.

Reports from the hospital were cheering. It might be some time before the Slogger was dismissed as well; but there was now no fear of complications.

The Welsh county brought along their best team, and on the Saturday Bates and Bell made a big stand. But no one else did anything notable, and when stumps were drawn Markshire had 81 for no wicket in response to Glamorgan's 298. Dick had bowled quite well without much success—two for 63. Armley had done best, with four for 58. Again Edmead had shown that he was quite capable of filling Peter Nevern's place. There was no showiness about his work; but it was always quick and neat.

Dick was starting out with Andy on Sunday evening when the long figure of Gregory Balkwill approached their home.

"Coming to look you up, Dare," said the county crack. "I've something rather special to say to you."

Andy took the hint at once.

"I'll go along slowly, Dick," he said. "You can catch me up."

Dick used his latchkey, and led the way back into the sitting-room he and Andy shared.

"Anybody about?" asked Balkwill.

"Nobody but us in the house," replied Dick.

"That's all right. I don't want anybody to hear, and I've got to ask you before I begin to keep what I say a dead secret."

There was no sign of nervousness about Balkwill. The inevitable cigarette was between his lips, and above it his eyes were steady and his features were impassive. Yet somehow Dick sensed the fact that he had strung himself up to come and tell what he meant to tell.

"If you say so," Dick answered. "You have my promise."

"Good enough! Well, I've been to see Slogger Batts today. The first visitor the poor blighter's had."

"Didn't know he and you were pals."

"I wouldn't say we were that. But I've known him some time. I didn't go exactly out of friendship, either; there was something I wanted to find out. And I found it out!" He paused. Dick was silent.

"Don't you want to know what it was?" Balkwill asked.

"Naturally; I thought you meant to tell me."

"You're a cool one, Dare. The cards are stacked against you; but I rather fancy you'll win the game for all that. Of course, you're aware that our highly respected captain is no pal of yours?"

"Urwine? I'd be sorry to have him as a pal."

"You're dead right there!" For once Balkwill showed signs of feeling. "He's not the man to be anybody's friend, though he may pretend to be. Did you ever get on to the solution of your getting left behind at Yarnley yesterday week?"

"I couldn't prove it; but I'm pretty sure that Blair worked the trick, and that Urwine was in it," Dick answered.

"So am I. You never will be able to prove it, though. They wanted to keep you out of that game—they wanted to keep you out of the team altogether, of course, but they hadn't much time then. They were a bit rushed. You did too well in it to suit Urwine, though he tried to crab you. Then you knocked him out of the train; and I guess he and his jackal might have made something black out of that if there hadn't happened to be a witness of what really occurred."

"I know. You did me a good turn then."

"I want to do you another—a bigger one. And yet I don't know that my warning will count for much. You are wide to the fact that Urwine's got it in for you. But I don't suppose you thought he had a hand in the Slogger business?"

"No, I certainly didn't! He couldn't have foreseen how that would turn out."

"It turned out quite contrary to what he'd expected. His idea was that the Slogger should beat you up until you were unfit for the game next day—see? But the way it went suited him all right—or would have done if the Slogger had been obliging enough to kick the bucket. Oh, you wouldn't have gone to prison—I can't see any jury making it worse than justifiable homicide. But I doubt if you'd ever have played for Markshire again. John Ainsley is a great man, and in most ways he's broad-minded. But he has his fads, and you've got right up against one of the chief of them."

"I know," said Dick. "He thinks I'm a quarrelsome young bounder. I'm not, really; but I can understand his thinking so. How did you find out what you've told me?"

"From the Slogger. He hasn't had all his pay for the job yet, and he wanted me to see Urwine about it for him. It's a bit like treachery to be telling you, I know. But I don't think you'll want the blackguard worse punished than he has been. You don't get on to it, I see. Well, the Slogger knows that Urwine and he and I are all birds of a feather—that's the explanation."

"You're not!" cried Dick hotly. "You'd never have had a hand in such a scheme as that, Balkwill!"

Balkwill shrugged his shoulders, and lighted another cigarette at the glowing end of the stub he took from his lips.

"I never have had," he said. "I've not been tempted

that way. But I'm not very good at resisting temptation, and one never knows what may happen. Well, you're warned, boy! Keep both eyes open for Urwine's tricks; and don't forget that Mr. Bertie Blair is lurking in the background. He's as poisonous as the other rotter, but not as dangerous, because he's a funk. Urwine might risk his neck. The nearest to that Blair would go would be to risk someone else's."

"I'm ever so much obliged to you, Balkwill, and the warning will help me. Are you going to carry the Slogger's message to Urwine?"

"Haven't made up my mind about that yet. Most likely I shall do it, though. Urwine won't be pleased to hear that I know. But if he doesn't hear that now he will when they discharge Batts, and my keeping it dark would only make him suspicious."

Dick longed to ask what it was that tied Balkwill to a man whom he plainly disliked and despised. But he was given no encouragement to ask that; he knew that any question would only mean a snub. And he could not see how it would be possible for him to help the crack.

He was sure now that Balkwill's feelings towards him were very friendly, though why they should be he could not even guess; and again he could not ask.

The long fellow rose.

"Well, I think I'd better go!" he said.

In another minute Balkwill had gone; and Dick hurried to join Andy.

After the Match!

JUST outside the gates of the Markshire County Ground on the Monday morning Dick ran into Blair.

The meeting was utterly unexpected. If Dick had known that he was likely to see Urwine's jackal, as Balkwill had called him, he would have been on his guard. As it was, the hot blood surged into his brain, and he was speaking before he had time to take thought.

Blair would have passed him without a word or a look. But Dick arrested him with a sharp: "Hi, Blair!"

No one else was in sight. It was too early yet for spectators to be gathering. The gates were not open.

"I've nothing to say to you," answered Blair, making a big attempt at haughtiness. "I don't care even to talk with ruffians of your sort. It's the merest chance that you're not in gaol now, with a charge of murder hanging over you!"

"Murder? My great-aunt's foot!" snapped Dick. "It wouldn't have been murder, anyway; I only defended myself. I'm not sure that it would be murder if I killed you—insecticide would be the right name for it!"

Blair showed his teeth. "Go easy!" he said. "I'm not standing much from you!"

"What will you do, then? You know I can lick you, and I'm ready to do it here and now. But you won't fight again. See here, Blair, you keep that long nose of yours out of my affairs! I know who worked that trick on me at Yarnley. You gave yourself away with that bag of yours. All ready to play in my place, weren't you? But I don't quite see you ever again playing for Markshire!"

"Think you can stop me?" snarled Blair. "My good fellow, you've had a lot of luck in getting three matches with the county. My prophecy is that you'll never get a fourth!"

Dick snapped his fingers in the speaker's face, leaving his own face invitingly open to assault. But Blair did not accept the silent invitation, any more than he had the spoken one. He broke away, and strode on towards the town.

Before he reached the pavilion Dick realised that he had made a mistake. He should have passed Blair as though he had never seen him before.

"Don't know that Mr. Ainsley isn't right in thinking I'm a quarrelsome bounder!" he muttered to himself.

But he had not been quite as injudicious as he might have been. He had not even mentioned Urwine's name, though when he had tongue-lashed Blair the thought of the other rotter had been in his mind all the time.

Urwine was not on the ground when play was resumed. Blair had gone to his rooms.

Herbert Blair had never been straight. His friendship with Urwine was based on cold calculation. He, like others, had assumed that Leonard Urwine would succeed to most of John Ainsley's fortune. And the rascal thought he knew more than others, for he had heard Mr. Edward Deedes, one of the partners in his firm, say something that he had construed into a statement that John Ainsley had heart disease. It had not been a statement, merely a suggestion, made when the speaker believed it impossible that any but his brother should hear it. But Blair heard a great many things that the partners did not suspect him of knowing.

Cold calculation was now reinforced by hot rage. Blair had stooped to rascality of many kinds; but till to-day he had never played with the idea of murder.

Even now he had no notion of risking his own neck. Balkwill had been right as to that. But Blair could egg on Urwine, and get a bigger hold over him than ever. That hold would mean much when Urwine handled the many thousands that had been John Ainsley's. Blair knew all about the penalties attaching to conviction for blackmail. He did not fear them.

The lie he told to Urwine had a basis of fact. It was true that Dick's name occurred in a codicil to John Ainsley's will. The legacy was not a big one; but that Blair did not know, though he had tried to find out. The very fact that Mr. Ainsley should have left money to Dick scared him. Who could tell where this was to end? Urwine was out of favour with his relative for the time being; and here was a fellow who might in no long time make as big a name at cricket as Urwine's. And everyone knew that cricket was as the very breath of life to John Ainsley.

"There you are, Len," said Blair, when he had told his story, a cunning mixture of fact and fiction. "If it's five thousand now what may it not be in a few months? You'll be cut out entirely if you don't do something!"

"I've done all I can to crab him with Ainsley," replied Urwine sulkily. "But he bobs up again. The Grand Bashaw gets mad with him, and then forgives him. You heard about his offering bail?"

"Oh, I heard that! There's only one thing for it!"

"What's that?"

"Get him out of the way!"

(This is not the first time Leonard Urwine has attempted to get Dick Dare out of the way, but fortunately for Dick the luck of the game had not been with Urwine. You will learn how successful Urwine's latest piece of treachery is when you read next week's long instalment.)

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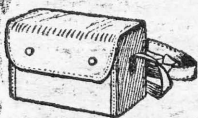
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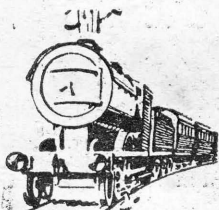
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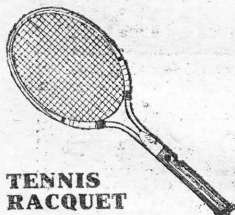
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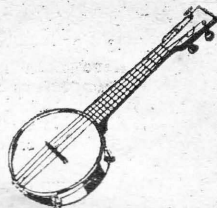
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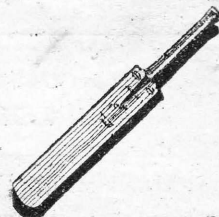
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